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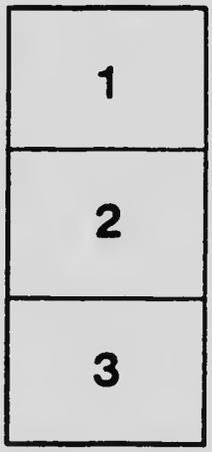

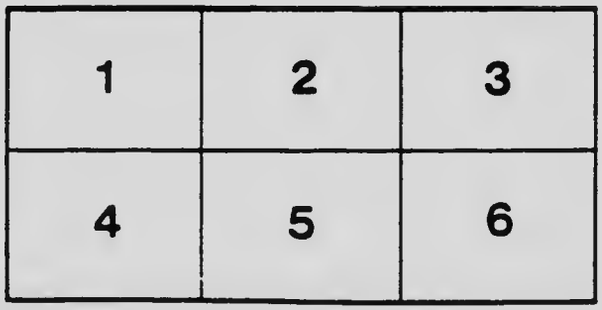

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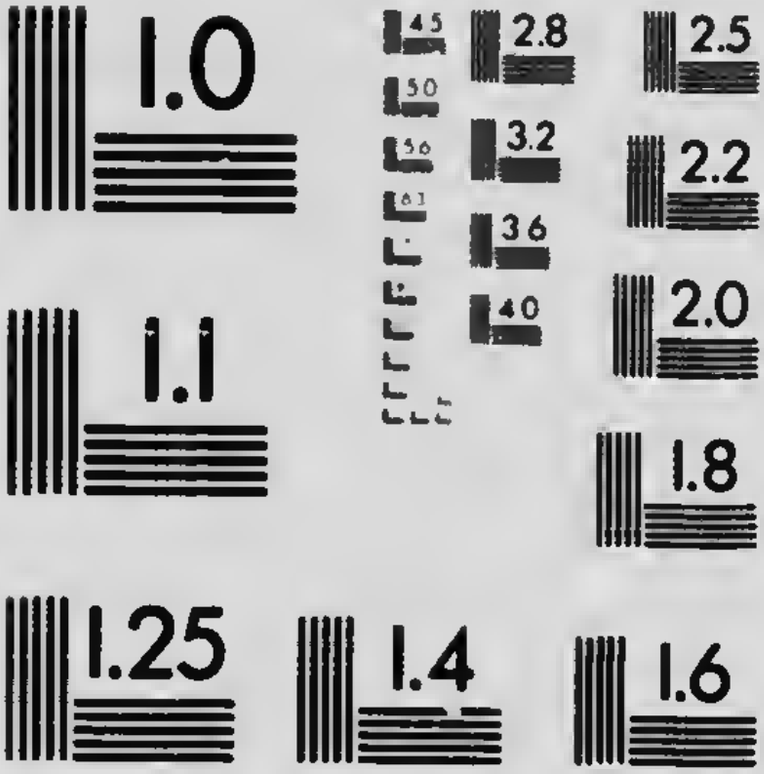

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THROUGH DESERTS AND OASES OF CENTRAL ASIA

Strike me dead, the track has vanished.
Well, what now? We've lost the way,
Demons have bewitched our horses,
Led us in the wilds astray.

PUSHKIN.

A *YA-YIEH* OR YAMEN RUNNER.

Frontispiece.

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THROUGH DESERTS AND OASES OF CENTRAL ASIA

BY

MRS. ELLA SYKES

[illegible]

[illegible]

"THROUGH [illegible] IN A [illegible]" AND "A HOME HELP IN CANADA"

AND

BRIGADIER-GENERAL SIR PERCY SYKES

K.C.I.E., C.B., C.M.G.

[illegible] MEDALLIST OF THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

[illegible] OF

"[illegible] OF [illegible]" AND "THE GLORY OF THE [illegible] WORLD"

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED

ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1920

555

THROUGH DESERTS AND OASES OF CENTRAL ASIA

BY

MISS ELLA SYKES
F.R.G.S.
AUTHOR OF
"THROUGH PERSIA ON A SIDE-SADDLE" AND "A HOME HELP IN CANADA"

AND

BRIGADIER-GENERAL SIR PERCY SYKES
K.C.I.E., C.B., C.M.G.
GOLD MEDALLIST OF THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY
AUTHOR OF
"A HISTORY OF PERSIA" AND "THE GLORY OF THE SHIA WORLD"

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
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PREFACE

FEW works dealing with Chinese Turkestan and the Pamirs have been published of late years, although the Heart of Asia, where the empires of Great Britain, Russia and China meet, can never fail to excite our interest. Furthermore, the great trade route which ran from China to the Roman Empire lay across Chinese Turkestan, from which remote land silk was introduced into Europe.

The present book has been written in two parts. The chapters composing Part I., which describe the nine months' journey in deserts and oases, in mountains and plains, have been written by my sister, while I am responsible for those dealing with the geography, history, customs and other subjects.

We are indebted to Mr. Bohlin of the Swedish Mission in Chinese Turkestan, and to *Khan Sahib*, Iftikhar Ahmad of the British Consulate-General, Kashgar, for much assistance ; and also to Dr. F. W. Thomas, of the India Office, who has read through the historical sketch.

A good deal of new material will be found in the various chapters, and as far as possible the subjects so ably and exhaustively dealt with by Sir Aurel Stein have been avoided.

To my sister belongs the honour of being the first Englishwoman to cross the dangerous passes leading to and from the Pamirs and, with the exception of Mrs. Littledale, to visit Khotan.

We greatly enjoyed the nine months we spent in Chinese Turkestan and on the "Roof of the World," and if we succeed in arousing the interest of our readers in this old-world backwater of Asia, and at the same time convey something of its distinctive charm, our ambitions will be fulfilled.

P. M. SYKES.

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ERRATUM

Page 134, line 22, *for* "there was no sign of a division" *read* "it was broken up into islands."

PART I

CHAPTER I

ACROSS THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE IN WAR TIME

The cities are called *Taskent*[1] and *Caskayre*,[1] and the people that warre against *Taskent* are called *Cassaks*[1] of the law of *Mahomet*, and they which warre with the said countrey of *Caskayre* are called Kirghiz, Gentiles and idolators.—ANTHONY JENKINSON.

ON March 5, 1915, my brother and I started off on our long journey to Kashgar, the capital of Chinese Turkestan, where he was to act for Sir George Macartney, the well-known Consul-General, who was taking leave.

Owing to the War, we were obliged, as the first stage of our journey, to travel to Petrograd by the circuitous route through Norway, Sweden and Finland. The small Norwegian steamer, the *Iris*, in which we embarked at Newcastle, made its way up the coast of Scotland to a point opposite Peterhead in order to avoid mines and submarines, after which it crossed to Bergen. We passed two choppy nights in stuffy cabins with the portholes tightly screwed up, and I was too prostrate with sea-sickness to care when the engines of our steamer stopped dead during the first afternoon. My brother rushed up on deck to see if we were held up by a German submarine, which might mean the unpleasant experience of internment for

[1] Tashkent, Kashgar, Cossacks.

him, but after a couple of hours we went on again, and no explanation of the delay was given us.

Some three months later this same vessel was attacked in reality, two torpedoes being fired at her, and only the zigzag course skilfully pursued by the captain saved her from destruction. Amundsen, the discoverer of the South Pole, was on board, and wrote to the papers describing the incident, and strongly reprobated Germany's policy towards neutral shipping, which, he declared, had converted him to the side of the Allies.

To return to our journey, we finally steamed in safety up a long fiord, and Bergen stood up picturesquely against its background of snow-covered hills. We thought that the pleasant-mannered Norwegians were decidedly Scotch in appearance, and a sturdy youth, quite of the type of a Highland gillie, soon guided us to the Hospidset Hotel, which had originally belonged to the Hanseatic League in Bergen. In old days the apprentices lived in this house, being locked up safely at night, and though the building has undergone considerable restoration, it is still a characteristic piece of architecture.

Next morning we tramped round Bergen in our snow-boots, finding the steep roads very slippery with frozen snow, even the inhabitants falling headlong now and again. Here and there children were merrily tobogganing, dashing recklessly across the main street through which the trams were running, and hurling themselves down steep inclines on the other side in a way that made me shudder. They were all sensibly clad in woollen garments, their rosy faces peering out from fur caps or fur-trimmed hoods, and it did one good to see them. A graver note was struck as a

funeral passed by, with all the mourners on foot; and the pastor, in a stiff ruff with muslin frills at his wrists, seemed to have returned from the sixteenth century, and might have posed for a portrait of Calvin. Sleighs were everywhere, drawn by sturdy little ponies that raced along at a great pace with jingling bells and kept their feet wonderfully.

We left by the night train for the twenty-seven hours' run to Stockholm, changing at Christiania, and next day were speeding through a land of snow and pine inhabited by a hardy-looking, fur-clad race. Fish seemed a staple article of food, and we were offered salted prawns, herring-salad, raw sardines and anchovies; veal, ham and tongue, with pickles or cold fried bacon, forming the meat course. There were no sweets or fruit, but for compensation we had delicious coffee and cream. In the restaurant car the bread and rolls were fastened up in grease-proof paper, sugar in tiny packets, and biscuits in sealed bags, in order to prevent unnecessary handling.

It was night when we steamed into the "Venice of the North," a city which must be lovely in the summer, as it rises from its waters; but at the time of our visit the river was covered with floating blocks of grey ice, and all the world was skating or ski-ing.

The people were not unfriendly to us, but from more than one source we learnt that, owing to their hereditary fear of Russia, the Swedes were generally partisans of Germany, in contradistinction to the Norwegians, who, as a nation, were warmly in favour of the Allies.

We had a five o'clock dinner (three to five o'clock being the usual time, reminding one of early Victorian customs), and then settled ourselves into the com-

fortable sleeping coupés which we were to inhabit for two nights as far as Karungi, the direct route across the Gulf of Bothnia being inadvisable for obvious reasons. There were four racks for light luggage in each compartment, a convenient washing apparatus and a table, and we could open our windows, whereas in Russia we found the windows screwed up until the spring.

But there was one thing in which the Russian trains, with their three bells rung for departure, compared favourably with those of Scandinavia, and that was that the latter gave no real warning when they were about to start. The engine whistled and moved off immediately, with the result that I was always nervous about walking up and down the platform, for the iron steps leading up to the carriages were so slippery with frozen ice that I feared to risk a fall if I scaled them in a hurry.

A Russian girl travelling in the carriage next to ours had given her ticket to the care of a French lady, a complete stranger to her, and, strolling along the platform with a fur collar round her neck but no fur coat, was unluckily left behind. The railway officials sent her ticket back to her and took care of her belongings, and I trust that some good Samaritan aided her, but she must have had a most unpleasant experience. I asked a Swede who talked to me why the trains gave practically no signal when they started, and he said that there was some reason which he had forgotten.

The country lay deeper in snow the farther north we advanced, and on either side, as far as eye could reach, the undulating ground was covered with vast forests of fir and pine. At intervals we passed little

towns and villages, the small wooden houses, painted in many colours, giving the impression of toy-dwellings. The brightly clad fur-capped little girls with long fair plaits of hair seemed as if they had come to life from the fairy books of my childhood, and one could almost credit the existence of gnomes and trolls in those limitless uninhabited tracts of pine. Soldiers in blue-grey or navy-blue uniforms, with white sheepskin caps or picturesque three-cornered cloth hats, stood about on the platforms up and down which we tramped in our snow-boots whenever the train halted. As there was no restaurant car we obtained our meals at the station buffets, halts of about half an hour being made at 10 A.M., 3 P.M. and 10 P.M. In the absence of waiters the hungry crowd of passengers helped themselves, selecting from a tray laid out with different kinds of fish, cheese, pickles, etc., or piling their plates with hot pork or veal. I made invariably for the big cauldron of excellent soup with vegetables, and there was always coffee and milk, bread and cakes in abundance, and no pushing or hustling on the part of those travelling.

At last we reached Karungi, the frontier between Sweden and Russia, and scores of sleighs were in waiting at the station to convey the passengers the short distance to the Russian Karungi. The fine-looking Russian Consul, clad in a splendid fur coat and cap to match, was most obliging, and cheered us greatly with the news—alas, quite inaccurate, as we found out later—that the Allied fleets had silenced all the forts in the Dardanelles! My brother went off to pass our heavy luggage through the Swedish Customs, and I had some difficulty in collecting our small possessions on to one sleigh, because half a

dozen men and boys, clad in nondescript garments of fur and leather, hurled themselves upon hold-alls and dressing-cases and bore them off in all directions, utterly regardless of my remonstrances. The only thing I could do was to follow the most responsible-looking of my self-constituted porters, and when he deposited his burden on a sleigh I induced him to accompany me in a hunt among the lines of shaggy little ponies, finding the tea-basket in one place, a hat-box or a bundle of sticks and umbrellas mixed up with another passenger's luggage, and so on. The Consul told me to come and drink coffee in the buffet, exclaiming reassuringly, "You can leave everything safely, for in this part of the world the people do not know how to steal."

At last we drove off in the keen air across a level waste of snow, traversing a frozen river which forms the actual boundary, and in half an hour, with many a bump and jolt, we reached a gate through which, after we had shown our passports, we were admitted into Finland.

We had now a wait of some six hours, which we spent in walking on the crisp snow or sitting in the little station buffet, where I observed that coffee had given way to tea, the Russian national beverage, drunk in glasses with a slice of lemon and much sugar. From now onwards the *pièce de résistance* of our chief meals was sturgeon. I liked it fairly well when stewed or fried, but it was usually tough when served cold. Some of these enormous fish are said to weigh two or three tons.

When the train made a tardy appearance it could not accommodate all the passengers, and many were perforce left behind to follow the next day. The first

halt was at Tornea, to which point travellers used to drive until the extension of the line to Karungi after the outbreak of the War, and, though we were in the Arctic Circle and it was early in March, the air seemed quite mild as we rushed across Finland, our wood-fed engine belching forth immense whorls of smoke. At Vyborg we entered Russia, and at midnight of the second day reached Petrograd.

In the Astoria Hotel it was remarkable to see every one drinking *kvass*, a somewhat mawkish beverage made from bread or from cranberries, in lieu of wine or spirits. In Finland alcoholic refreshments were obtainable in the restaurant car, but now we found ourselves in a country which the will of an autocrat had made so strictly teetotal that we were unable even to purchase methylated spirit for our tea-basket!

Some of our Russian acquaintances spoke with enthusiasm of the beneficial effect of the Tsar's edict, one competent observer pointing out that the Russian women were just beginning to take to drink, which would have meant the ruin of many thousands of homes. On the other side, there were murmurs among the well-to-do, who were deprived of their favourite beverages unless they could obtain a doctor's certificate of ill-health, which did not, however, seem difficult to arrange. I was asked more than once whether King George was about to follow the lead given by the Tsar, Russians not being very clear as to the limitations of a constitutional monarchy.

Soldiers were to be seen everywhere, sometimes drilling near the great red Winter Palace, sometimes as reservists, with numbers chalked upon their backs, or again as small parties of wounded in charge of

kind-faced hospital nurses. I heard pathetic accounts of the extreme poverty of the men who were being nursed back to health in the English Hospital directed by Lady Georgina Buchanan, who had had the kindly thought of fitting them out when they were dismissed to their peasant homes; the totally disabled being trained in basket-making. Both at Petrograd and at Moscow, our next halting-place, those actively engaged in nursing spoke highly of the courage and gratitude of their patients. In the latter city an English girl of only nineteen and a Russian lady of the same age, neither of whom had had any training in nursing, were in charge of a hospital containing forty-five wounded soldiers. They did all the bandaging themselves, assisted at every operation, and supervised the peasant women who performed the more menial share of the work. My devoted compatriot told me that the men called her "Little Sister," and were marvellously brave when operated upon, saying that her presence gave them courage. Owing to the absence of the great majority of the trained nurses at the front, these capable amateurs were of the utmost service. We heard that the Russian medical faculty disapproved of inoculation for typhoid, giving the somewhat inadequate reason that "there were so many worse diseases," and consequently the soldiers suffered terribly from this scourge.

My brother and I did the sights of Petrograd, with its many gold-covered domes, cupolas and spires, but I will refrain from describing the gorgeous interior of St. Isaak, the pictures of the Hermitage, or even the deeply interesting house in which Peter the Great lived while building his "window opening to the West."

Moscow, with its hundreds of gilt-domed or purple or blue or green cupolas, that bizarre orgy of colour and fantastic design called the Church of Ivan the Terrible, and the ancient Kremlin built to resist Tartar inroads, gave me, as indeed it does to most travellers, the impression of a semi-Oriental city.

We were in the very heart of Russia, and no one could fail to be struck by the intense devotion—I refrain from calling it superstition—of the people. In the dim magnificence of the small but lofty Coronation Chapel, which has its walls literally encrusted with jewelled icons, crowds were kissing the hands and feet of the sacred pictures all day long, in defiance of every hygienic principle. Long-haired priests in embroidered copes were chanting services, and as the body of a saint, dead centuries ago, had just been exhumed, it was confidently expected that many miracles of healing would be wrought by the remains. Gilded and jewelled banners to be carried in procession stood in the ornate chapels, which had gorgeous doors through which no woman might pass. On the great day of his coronation the Tsar passed through these portals, anointed and crowned himself, then issued forth, the Father of his people, to perform the same ceremony on the Tsaritsa.

The monarch, in common with the humblest of his subjects, uncovers himself as he passes under one of the entrances to the Kremlin, above which stands a particularly holy icon. Indeed in every room of every Russian house, even in the hotels, hangs some pictured saint with a little lamp in front of him, while the railway stations and waiting-rooms are all provided with sacred guardians.

To these people the War was then a holy one.

The chambermaid of our hotel, who spoke German—a language it is forbidden to use in public—told me with tears that her only son had been killed at the front, that his father had died of grief when the news reached them, and that her daughter, working at a hospital, had had no news of her soldier-husband for three months and naturally feared the worst. "But we must not grumble," she ended bravely; "it is terrible for all of us, but with God's help our Tsar will conquer his enemies and we shall have peace once more."

Russians struck us as being somewhat silent in the streets, and we never heard any one whistle. It was explained that they have the same superstition about whistling as have the Persians, and look upon it as "devilish speech." In connection with this we were told that on one occasion an American bishop and his chaplain were visiting a monastery in Moscow, and to the horror of the monks the chaplain kept on bursting into snatches of whistling. But one of the holy men was equal to the occasion and, walking close behind the unconscious offender, made the sign of the cross repeatedly in order to avert any evil consequences!

The lack of efficiency in Russia was very noticeable. For example, to cash our letters of credit in a bank was a tedious business, the money being slowly counted with the aid of an abacus. The shopkeepers also depend greatly on these aids to arithmetic. It was moreover a land of tips. In every private house the servant who helped you on and off with your fur coat and galoshes expected a *pourboire*, and on leaving a hotel we were surrounded by a throng of waiters, porters of different grades, and a bevy of small boys, all intent on fees.

During the next section of our journey to Tashkent the trains were by no means as comfortable as before. Our only light was a guttering candle in a lantern placed high above the carriage door, and, what was worse, the double windows were screwed up for the winter, all the air we breathed passing through most inadequate ventilators in the roof. After some thirty hours of semi-suffocation it was a relief when the train stopped at Samara, and its great bridge over the Volga. Before we crossed, soldiers with fixed bayonets filed into the corridors and lined the train, and henceforward sentries stood with fixed bayonets on all the platforms. Instead of going through to Tashkent, our train stopped for eighteen hours, so we drove perforce to the best hotel in the place. There I was ushered into a bedroom which had only a mattress on the bedstead; but a cheery maid soon produced sheets, pillows and towels, these articles from now onward being charged separately in the bill: she also filled up the water-tank which discharged itself into the basin by a kind of squirt, liable to drench the unwary. A hot bath is an expensive luxury in Russia, costing from three to five shillings; but I never appreciated it at its proper value. The bath, filled with water too hot for me to plunge my hand into, was invariably taken in a tiny room without ventilation in which a stove was fiercely burning, and the attendant, armed with a thermometer, was always greatly astonished when I demanded a copious admixture of cold water. Half the room would be occupied by a divan covered with a sheet on which to repose after the bath, and once or twice I had some difficulty in getting rid of the maid, so anxious was she to wrap me in a second

sheet, with which Russians drape themselves before they step into the water.

Samara is an important provincial town, but the whole place looked poor and shabby, partly because the coloured plaster coating of the houses was dropping off in unsightly patches. The wide streets radiated from a small public garden in which stood a statue of Alexander II., the Liberator, and, as it was Sunday, all the world was promenading in its best clothes along the slush-covered pavements, the thaw having set in. The peasants looked picturesque in short sheepskin coats, worn with the wool inside, fur caps with lappets to protect the ears, long leather riding-boots, putties tied up with string and thick leather gloves. The shaggy hats of black or white sheepskin made their wearers look like brigands in opera, and beside them the women, in long black coats much kilted at the waist, with their heads tied up in woollen shawls, appeared decidedly tame.

We made our way down to the Volga and walked on the frozen river, which was a mile wide, watching the drinking-water of the town being drawn from various holes in the ice.

At the railway station that evening we found a large crowd on the platform assembled to give a hearty send-off to a trainload of soldiers evidently hailing from the neighbourhood. The men were travelling to the front in horse-boxes, and leant over the wooden barriers wildly cheering and waving their caps, full of health and spirits, and one could hardly bear to think that many would never return, or, sadder still, would come home incapacitated for the rest of their days.

Owing to the War there were no restaurant-cars

attached to the trains, and as the time-tables were unaltered we had halts of only ten or twelve minutes three or four times a day, when the passengers made a frenzied rush to get what they could at the inferior station buffets. We usually bought something in the way of meat, cheese and bread, and carried it back with us to our carriage, after we had gulped down plates of the excellent cabbage soups called *stchee* or *borsch*. The only long halt we made—one of forty minutes—was at a station with no buffet whatever. The farther east we went the less food could we procure: sometimes packets of inferior Russian biscuits were the only stock-in-trade of the buffet, and if it had not been for our soup-packets we should have been half-starved. As it was, we were often unpleasantly hungry, hot water being the only thing that we could be sure of obtaining.

In spite of this the journey was full of interest. We were travelling across limitless steppes, and the melting of the snow in patches showed that spring was at hand, when the sun would break forth from the grey, lowering skies. Near Orenburg we noticed many tons of hay ready to be despatched to the front, and as we halted at Alexis I suddenly saw the ungainly forms of camels. Nearer and nearer they came, padding across the snow, drawing sleighs laden with hay, and with a leap of the heart I realized that we were once again in the East, that Europe was left behind, and that we had entered that vast mysterious continent of Asia, cradle of the human race and birthplace of its great religions.

The following day we passed the Sea of Aral, with masted ships riding at anchor in its port; and by now all traces of snow had gone, and the sandy

steppe was scantily dotted with coarse grasses. Sometimes we traversed stretches of salt-encrusted ground, and in places the rolling sand-dunes were planted and bound together with rushes in order to prevent them from encroaching upon the railway, or long lines of fencing answered the same purpose for the snowdrifts.

We saw few signs of life, and the loneliness of the steppe made me realize something of those vast empty spaces of Asia which from lack of water will for ever be dreary wastes forsaken by mankind. Yet a picturesque crowd was usually assembled at the stations. Hairless-faced men with high cheek-bones were clad in long padded coats reaching to their heels, or wore sheepskins, their rope or straw-soled shoes being tied with leather thongs criss-cross from knee to ankle over thick woollen stockings. Among a variety of headgear the quaintest resembled early Victorian coal-scuttle bonnets tied under the chin. They were made of brightly coloured velvet, with broad fur-lined brims, a fur-lined flap behind and lappets over the ears, and looked most comical when worn by brawny Kirghiz, who strode up and down the platforms trailing long whips in their hands.

The warm weather was now beginning, and the Russian women who sold tea and hot water from big brass samovars had discarded their winter clothes and appeared in flowered cotton dresses with gaily coloured handkerchiefs over their heads. Their children were running about barefoot, and I was amused at watching an encounter between a lightly clad urchin and a smart little boy who was travelling in our overheated train. This latter, who had a long fur-lined coat, a fur cap and galoshes over his boots, held up

his foot for the admiration of the platform youngster, who laughed good-humouredly, and stretched out his dusty toes in response.

In spite of the warm sunshine, ours were the only windows open in the whole train, and when, after leaving Samara, my brother had obtained fresh air by freely tipping a most reluctant conductor, an official higher in rank came to enquire whether it was not a mistake and whether after all we did not wish to be screwed up again! I could not imagine why our fellow-passengers did not follow our example, because, before we reached Tashkent, the sun flamed down from a cloudless blue sky; the hoopoe, harbinger of spring, chased its mate; the crested larks sang, and the children offered big bunches of the little mauve iris. Ploughing was visible in places, and a faint green flush was spreading over the vast plain, which near Tashkent gave way to grassy downs on which cattle grazed.

At the imposing-looking station of Turkestan we made enquiries respecting the flags that we noticed hanging out on all the platforms, and to our joy were told that they were in honour of the taking of Przemyzl. An officer of military police with whom my brother talked, said that this victory had come at an opportune moment, as there was considerable unrest among the native population.

We were sorry not to see the tomb erected by Tamerlane in the old city of Turkestan to the memory of a Kirghiz saint, for M. Romanoff, an authority on Mohamedan art, who has visited a large proportion of the mosques and shrines of Central Asia, considers this splendid building to be a masterpiece.

CHAPTER II

BEYOND THE TIAN SHAN TO KASHGAR

Farghana is a country of small extent, but abounding in grain and fruits; and it is surrounded with hills on all sides except on the west. . . . Andijan is the capital. The district abounds in birds and beasts of game. Its pheasants are so fat that the report goes that four persons may dine on the broth of one of them and not be able to finish it.—*Memoirs of Baber.*

AFTER three days and nights in the train it was pleasant to make a halt at Tashkent, the capital of Russian Turkestan, though the sudden change of climate was somewhat exhausting. It was towards the end of March, and the whole town, famous for its fruit trees, was embowered in pink and white blossom, and the avenues of magnificent poplars, willows and beautiful Turkestan elms were shaking out their fresh green leaves.

The Russians, under General Kaufmann, took Tashkent about fifty years ago, and have laid out the new town with broad roads planted with fine trees that are watered by irrigation. There are churches, public parks, tram-lines and imposing-looking shops. the considerable Russian population appearing to mix freely with the Sarts, as the inhabitants are termed by the dominant race. In India a white woman of whatever class has a position with the natives, but here the ordinary Russian woman is seemingly on an equality with them, and not infrequently marries

them. In the best confectioner's shop, served by Russian girls, natives came in and bought and ate cakes and sweets on the premises, side by side with smart officers or elegant ladies evidently belonging to the upper circles of Tashkent society.

Even in this remote part of the Russian Empire the War was brought home to the inhabitants by the presence of fifteen thousand prisoners, Germans and Austrians. The latter, who were mostly Slavs, had the privilege of shopping in the town, and we heard that they were on excellent terms with their captors, whereas the Germans were permitted no such relaxation of their captivity.

A long narrow street led from the Russian city straight into the native town with its mud-built houses, its little stalls of food and clothing, its mosques and shrines, and above all its gaily clad populace. But for the people I could have imagined myself to be in a Persian city; but here, instead of men in dingily coloured frock-coats and tall astrakhan hats, and women shrouded in black from head to foot, the inhabitants of both sexes revelled in colour. All wore smart velvet or embroidered caps, round which the greybeards swathed snowy turbans. The men had striped coats of many colours, the brighter the better, the little girls rivalling them with bold contrasts, such as a short, gold-laced magenta velvet jacket worn above a flowered, scarlet cotton skirt, or a coat of emerald green with a vivid blue under-garment. For the most part they were pretty, rosy-cheeked, velvet-eyed maidens, with their hair hanging down their backs in a dozen plaits, and I felt sorry to think that all their charm would shortly have to disappear behind the long cloak, beautifully embroidered though

it might be, and the hideous black horsehair veil affected by their mothers.

One fascinating little figure adorned with big earrings and bracelets came dancing down an alley into the street, holding out the ends of a scarlet veil which she had thrown over her head, her cotton dress and trousers being in two shades of rose. She pirouetted up to a tall man in a rainbow-coloured silk coat who was carrying a tin can, and had paused at the steps of the mosque to let the children gather round him. To my surprise he began to dole out ice-cream in little glasses, and boys and girls had delicious "licks" in exchange for small coins. I remembered how envious I had felt in early youth when I saw English street urchins partaking of what seemed to me to be food fit for the gods, although my nurse allowed me no chance of sampling it, and in a moment the East and the West seemed to come very near, the ice-cream man acting as the bridge across the gulf.

After leaving Tashkent we travelled through a rich alluvial country watered by the Sir Daria, the classical Jaxartes, and halted on our way to Andijan at the ancient city of Khokand. As at Tashkent, the Russian and native towns are separate, and we hired a moon-faced, beardless Sart, attired in a long red and blue striped coat and with an embroidered skull-cap perched on his shaven head, to drive us round.

He raced his wiry little ponies at a great pace along a wide tree-planted avenue ending in a church of preternatural ugliness set in a public garden. Near by were Russian houses and shops, while small victorias containing grey-uniformed officers or turbaned Sarts dashed past, and native carts laden with bales of cotton creaked slowly by. Many of these carts

had big tilts, the wooden framework inside being gaudily painted, and the horses themselves were decked with handsome brass trappings.

The old town, with its high mud walls, flat-roofed squalid dwellings, a bazar closely resembling those to be found in any Asiatic city, and comparatively modern mosques, had little of interest, though a well-known traveller speaks of its thirty-five theological colleges: its roads, as usual, were bad and narrow, and must be rivers of mud in wet weather.

Many women were unveiled, others wore the ghoul-like horsehair face coverings, and some of their embroidered coats were so charming in design and colouring that I longed to do a "deal" with the wearers. Many of the people were squatting, eating melons which they store during the winter, or drinking tea, a Russian woman being evidently a member of one family group. We had one or two narrow shaves of colliding with other carriages, as our coachman threaded his way far too fast for safety and exchanged abusive epithets with his brother Jehus, among whom were Russians in black, sleeveless, cassock-like garments worn over scarlet cotton blouses. The harness of the little horses was adorned with many tufts of coloured wools, giving a pretty effect as these tassels nearly swept the ground or waved in the air. The life on the roads, the spring sunshine, the fresh green leaves, the white and pink of the blossom, and the orgy of colour furnished by the inhabitants, made the drive an unforgettable experience.

A few hours later we reached Andijan, where the railway ended, and here we had our last clean resting-place until we arrived at Kashgar. I noticed that the native women wore long grey burnouses with

black borders ending in two tails that were always trailing in the dust, and all hid their faces in the mask-like horsehair veils. It was the day before Palm Sunday, and as we strolled in the evening up the cobbled street of the town a large congregation was issuing from the church, every one carrying a small branch and a little candle, which each had lit in the sanctuary. In the darkness the scores of tiny lights looked like fire-flies, and I observed how carefully the sacred flame was sheltered from any draught, as it is considered most important to convey it home unextinguished. Our hotel was fairly good, but I was not pleased on retiring to find that my door did not lock, and that my window, opening on to a public balcony, had no fastening. To supplement these casual arrangements I made various "booby-traps" by which I should be awakened if any robber entered my room, but luckily slept undisturbed.

It may give some idea of the vast extent of the plains of Russia which we had crossed by train, when I mention that there was not a single tunnel on the hundreds of miles of rail between Petrograd and Andijan.

It was the end of March when we set out to drive the thirty miles from Andijan to Osh. We packed ourselves, our suit-cases and the lunch-basket into a little victoria, while Achmet, the Russian Tartar cook we had engaged at Tashkent, accompanied our heavy baggage in the diligence. The sky was overcast with heavy clouds, so there was no glare from the sun, and the rain of the previous night had laid the dust on the broad road full of ruts and holes. Ploughing was in full swing, barley some inches high in the fields, fruit blossom everywhere, and the poplars and

willows planted along the countless irrigation channels made a delicate veil of pale green. Beyond the cultivation lay bare rolling hills, behind which rose the lofty mountain ranges which we must cross before we could reach our destination.

The whole country seemed thickly populated, and we passed through village after village teeming with life, the source of which is the river, which ran at this time of year in a surprisingly narrow stream in its broad pebbled bed, and was so shallow that men on foot or on donkey-back were perpetually crossing it. Tortoises were emerging from their winter seclusion, the croak of the frog filled the land, hoopoes and the pretty doves which are semi-sacred and never molested flew about, and the ringing cry of quail and partridge sounded from cages in which the birds were kept as pets.

The men, if not busied with agriculture, were usually fast asleep or drinking tea on the mud platforms in front of their dwellings, and the gaily clad women slipped furtively from house to house, or, if riding, sat on a pillion behind the men. In fine contrast to her veiled sisters was a handsome Kirghiz lady following her husband on horseback through the Osh bazar, and making a striking figure in a long green coat, her head and chin wrapped in folds of white that left her massive earrings exposed to view. She rode astride every whit as well as the man did, exchanged remarks freely with him, and was moreover holding her child before her on the saddle. Other women were carrying cradles which must have made riding difficult, and often a child stood behind, clinging to its mother's shoulders. On entering the native town of Osh, mentioned in

Baber's Memoirs as being unsurpassed for healthiness and beauty of situation, we passed a mosque with such a badly constructed mud dome that it looked like a turnip, and made our way along a broad tree-planted Russian road to the *nomera*. This was a house with "furnished apartments to let," and the small rooms, by no means overclean, were supplied with beds, tables and chairs. We set to work to unpack our camp things, and sent Achmet out to buy bread, butter, meat, eggs, etc., for our two hundred and sixty mile ride to Kashgar.

Our host made no pretensions to supply food, but exactly opposite our lodgings was the officers' mess; with true Russian hospitality its members invited us to take our meals there, and next day at lunch we met a dozen officers, with their jovial, long-haired chaplain in black cassock with a broad silver chain and crucifix round his neck. Luckily for me there were a couple of officers who spoke German, though the others threatened them with heavy fines for daring to converse in the language of the Huns. In spite of the Tsar's edict, vodka and wine flowed freely (the doctor had evidently given medical certificates liberally to the mess) and numerous toasts were drunk, every one clinking his glass with my brother's and mine as the health of King George, the Tsar, our journey, and so on were given. All were most kind, though I could have wished Russian entertainments were not so long—that luncheon lasted over three hours—and we left in a chorus of good wishes for our ride to Kashgar.

We were roused early next morning by the arrival of our caravan of small ponies, and with much quarrelling on the part of their drivers the loads

were at last adjusted. We had our saddles put on a couple of ill-fed animals and started off beside the rushing river on our first stage of twenty miles. The ponies were very inferior to the fine mules with which we had travelled in Persia, and our particular steeds would certainly have broken down long before we reached Kashgar if we had not dismounted and walked at frequent intervals throughout the whole journey.

At first the road was excellent as we left pretty little Osh nestling under Baber's "mountain of a beautiful figure," and made our way up a highly cultivated valley towards the distant snowy peaks. We were escorted by a fine-looking *Ming Bashi* or "Commander of a Thousand," who had a broad velvet belt set with bosses and clasps of handsome Bokhara silver-work. He wore the characteristic Kirghiz headgear, a conical white felt with a turned-up black brim, and four black stripes, from the back to the front and from side to side of the brim, meeting at the top and finishing off with a black tassel. We were to see this headgear constantly during the next eight months, as it is worn throughout Chinese Turkestan and the Pamirs. Owing to the presence of these *Ming Bashis* we met with extreme consideration, village *Begs* and their servants escorting us at every stage and securing the right of way for us with caravans. This was a privilege that for my part I keenly appreciated, as the track, when it skirted the flanks of the mountains, was hardly ever wide enough for one animal to pass another, and I had no wish to be pushed out of my saddle over the precipice by the great bales of cotton that formed the load of most of the ponies we met. These officials usually secured

some garden or field, a place of trees and running water, where we could lunch and rest at mid-day, and often they brought a silken cushion which they offered to my brother. They were surprised when he handed it on to me, for in Mohamedan countries the woman is considered last—if at all.

In the Osh district horses, camels, donkeys, cows, goats and sheep were in abundance, the sheep having the *dumba* or big bunch of fat as a tail, which nourishes the animal when grass runs short during the winter months. They had long hair like goats and rabbit-like ears, were coloured black, white, brown, grey or buff, and looked far larger in proportion than the undersized cattle and ponies. On the road we saw many of the characteristic carts that had immensely high wheels with prominent hubs. The driver sat on a saddle on the horse's back, supporting his feet on the shafts, thereby depriving the animal of half its strength for pulling the load and proving that this nation of born riders has not grasped the elementary principles of driving. These carts had no sides, but carried their loads in a curious receptacle of trellis-work, as shown in the illustration.

We reached our first night's lodging about four o'clock, and I was glad to dismount, as riding at a foot pace on an animal that is a slow walker is a tedious business. All these halting-places in Russian territory were much alike—a couple of small plastered rooms, often with bedsteads, table and stools, sometimes looking into a courtyard where the ponies were tied for the night, but often with no shelter for the animals and their drivers. Jafar Bai, the *chuprassi* from the Kashgar Consulate sent to escort us, was of the utmost service to us on the road. I noticed that many

CART USED IN THE OSH DISTRICT.

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of the men we passed saluted him by throwing their whips from right to left across their chests, and their deference made me realize the high esteem in which he was held. He put up our camp beds, tables and chairs, and found water for our folding baths. It was usually cold at night, and besides warm underclothing I had a sleeping sack, rugs and my fur-lined coat. We always got up at 5.30 A.M., and I did a hasty toilette in the dark with the aid of my torch-light, Achmet producing coffee, eggs, bread, butter and jam for our early breakfast, while Jafar Bai packed our bedding.

Once or twice we were accommodated in the house of a village *Beg*, and found the floors covered with felts and carpets, and a table spread with bread, sweets, raisins, almonds and pistachios. One of our hosts kept his treasures in a wonderful gilt, red and black chest, from which he produced a handsome watch given him by the Russians. This chest emitted a loud musical note when opened or shut, in order, I presume, to warn the owner if thieves attempted to rifle it. At night his servants removed his bedding of Bokhara silken quilts, but with touching confidence left the box in our charge!

Our second day's march found us approaching the mountains, and we rode to the top of a low pass where hills slashed with scarlet, crimson and yellow rose one behind another, to be dominated by the glorious snow-covered Tian Shan peaks clear cut against a superb blue sky. Walking down the passes was certainly preferable to sitting on a stumbling pony, but I found it rather hard work, as the track was usually very steep and littered with loose stones, on which one could easily twist an ankle or tumble

headlong. Every now and again it looked as if we had reached the bottom, when lo, after turning a corner, the track zigzagged down beneath our feet seemingly longer and steeper than ever.

During this march we passed a party of Chinese bound for Kashgar, consisting of an official and a rich merchant with their retinues. The ladies of the party travelled in four mat-covered palanquins, each drawn by two ponies, one leading and one behind, and I pitied them having to descend these steep places in such swaying conveyances. They were attended by a crowd of servants in short black coats, tight trousers and black caps with hanging lappets lined with fur, the leaders being old men clad in brocades and wearing velvet shoes and quaint straw hats. As seems usual with upper-class Chinese, they were very indifferent horsemen, and sat on bundles of silk quilts, not attempting to guide their ponies in any way, but letting the burly Kirghiz lead them by the halters. In striking contrast to them was a fine-looking man in a long green and purple striped coat, from the handsome girdle of which hung a silver-sheathed knife. His boldly cut aquiline features were surmounted by a black fur cap, and as he rode down the pass on a beautiful Badakshani horse the pair made a delightful picture.

Caravans laden with bales of cotton toiled uphill towards us, and sometimes we met a string of camels; but ponies did most of the work here, their small heads peering out from between their bulky loads. They had bells hung round their necks, enabling the approach of a pack-train to be heard at a considerable distance, and specially favoured animals wore collars of blue beads to avert the evil eye.

Besides caravans we met gangs of Kashgaris going to work at Osh or Andijan during the summer, in order to earn the money on which they live throughout the winter. They were sturdy men, their white teeth flashing in faces tanned almost black by the sun, and they wore long padded cotton coats of all colours, the most usual being scarlet, faded to delicious tints. As these coats were turned back to enable them to walk more freely, we had the contrast of a bright turquoise blue, or an emerald green or a purple lining. Some walked barefoot, others in long leather riding-boots or felt leggings, and all had leather caps edged with fur. Each man carried a bundle of his belongings, out of which cooking-pots often peeped, and some one in the gang was certain to have a *tar*, a kind of mandoline, with which to amuse the party, or perhaps a bagpipe or a small native drum; it was pleasant to come across a group of these wayfarers beguiling their long march by listening to the music that has so strong a fascination for Orientals.

The farther we left Osh behind us the more barren became the country, until we marvelled how the flocks and herds could support life on the scanty vegetation. At one point the hills were a bright scarlet and it was strange to see a red mud-built village with sheep grazing in this brilliantly coloured setting. We crossed rivers and streams many times, but they were not deep, for the mountain snow had not yet melted, and we found the bridges formed of rough poplar stems, with big holes into which boulders were stuck, far more dangerous than the water. It was during this march that my pony nearly ended our joint careers by backing with me to the edge of a precipice. We were passing a donkey laden with

brushwood, an ordinary sight, of which my brother's horse on ahead had not taken the smallest notice, when my animal made a big shy, and if Jafar Bai had not seized the rein I held out to him and hauled at it manfully while I urged my mount with whip and voice, we should both have fallen into the river rushing far below.

The crux of our journey was the crossing of the Terek Dawan or Pass, 12,000 feet high, and the night before we lodged in *akhois*, at its foot, in place of the usual rest-house.

It was my first experience of the bee-hive like homes of the Kirghiz—"a dome of laths and o'er it felts were spread"—and, as we had ridden through heavy rain and hail the last part of the way, I was extremely thankful to pass behind a felt curtain and find myself in a snug circular room lined with felts and embroideries. A fire was lit on the ground in the centre, the smoke escaping from a large hole in the roof, and by squatting on the floor we could more or less avoid the acrid smoke that made our eyes water.

In the morning we started at seven o'clock, anxious to reach the top of the pass before the sun, now hot during the day, could melt the snow. To our intense relief it was a superb day, a few fleecy clouds sailing across a deep turquoise sky. I was clad in a mixture of arctic and tropical attire, wearing a leather coat under my thick tweed habit, woollen putties and fur-lined gloves, along with a pith hat, blue glasses and gauze veil. We soon came to the snow and zigzagged upwards on a narrow track moving in single file, any animal trying to pass another being liable to fall headlong in the soft deep snow on either

side, a fate that befell two of our party early in the day. After a while, as we advanced, the great peaks towered on all sides, sharply silhouetted against their blue background—nothing but white as far as eye could reach; and here and there skeletons sticking out of the snow bore eloquent witness to the terrible annual toll paid by the hundreds of horses and donkeys that have to cross this cruel pass. I could hardly believe that it was possible to ride over these mountains, so steeply did they rise above us; and at the worst part of the ascent some sturdy Kashgaris coming down towards us had much ado to keep their feet, even though they carried long staves, one man falling headlong and rolling a considerable distance. The last pull to the crest is almost perpendicular, and is noted for accidents—here my brother's pony nearly went over—but finally, caravan and all, we reached the summit of the pass in safety, and dismounted to enjoy the fine view. Before us lay the great Alai Range, peak towering above peak of boldly serrated mountains. Over us hovered a huge vulture, and as I looked down the track in front where the snow was partly melted, hideous heaps of bones were revealed, and I felt that the ill-omened bird knew that it would never lack food so long as Russia did nothing to improve this execrable road.

In books of travel the writer frequently "swings down" such places, but my experience was very different, as we crept down the worst parts on foot. The snow on the farther side was rotten, and our feet broke through it to water running underneath and big boulders. It was the kind of path on which one could easily break a leg, and for a loaded pony was

a cruel ordeal, if not almost impossible. Even where the snow had entirely melted near the foot of the pass the way lay through a mass of boulders and slippery mud most trying to any baggage animal.

For ourselves we had nothing to complain of, and a march of seven hours found us at the little rest-house enjoying some lunch; but our caravan fared very differently. The distance was only twelve miles, but so bad was the going that the ponies, though lightly laden, were about thirteen hours on the road, and four poor animals stayed out all night. We had no evening meal till nine o'clock, and our hold-alls when they arrived were encrusted with ice that had made its way inside and soaked our bedding. We had no means of drying it in the serai, and so were obliged to sleep in our clothes. We were too thankful to be safely over the pass to heed such minor discomforts, and were indeed most fortunate; for the road was closed for some days after our journey in order that a fresh track might be trampled down by driving unloaded animals across it.

On the morrow our caravan had a much-needed rest till mid-day, while we unpacked our boxes and dried our wet belongings in the sun. I was concerned about my face, as in spite of all my precautions I found that my cheeks, nose and lips were terribly swollen, and besides being burnt a bright scarlet, all my skin was coming off in patches, making me most unsightly in appearance. On my mentioning this experience not long ago to an eminent geographer and traveller, he assured me that, if I had thickly powdered my unlucky visage before encountering sun and snow, it would have got off scot-free, and I insert the hint for the benefit of future travellers.

Our next stage was Irkeshtam, situated at the junction of the Osh-Kashgar and Alai routes. In the time of Ptolemy it was an important centre on the great trade route which ran from Rome across Asia to China, the "Stone Tower" mentioned by the Greek geographer being either here or in the vicinity. To-day it consists of a small fort garrisoned by Cossacks, with customs and telegraph offices all set down in hopelessly barren surroundings.

We were hospitably welcomed by the customs official's wife and sister, but were sorry to find that our host was ill. After the nine o'clock supper we retired, my brother sleeping in some outhouse, and I in a little room which my hostess's sister had kindly vacated for me, where I had a queer experience. As the window was hermetically sealed up for the winter, and the stove was lit, I had perforce to leave the door open in order to escape partial suffocation. A large carpet was suspended from the ceiling above the bedstead, across which it was carried, and hung down to the floor, and upon the bed were a sheet, a velvet bedspread and a couple of lace-covered pillows. Slipping into my rugs I put out the lamp, and as I was composing myself for slumber I became aware of a stirring under the bed, and a breathing. Thinking it must proceed from the dog or cat, with both of which I had made friends, I tapped the carpet and said "Ssh!" reflecting that if I troubled to drive the animal out it would be sure to return again by the open door, and as all was quiet I thought no more about the matter and went to sleep.

Some time in the middle of the night I was suddenly roused by feeling the bed violently jolted and to my horror heard loud and unmistakably human snores

proceeding from under it. Considerably startled, I sat up in the pitch darkness and listened to heavy breathing while I summed up the situation. The intruder could not be a burglar, as there was nothing to steal, and of course I was in no danger, as I could rouse the house in a moment, my door being open. I felt it would be wrong to make a disturbance as our host was so ill; I could not communicate with my brother, for I had no idea where he was, and it would have been impossible to leave the house and search for him in the wind and darkness, with savage dogs roaming about. Another alternative would have been to light the lamp and turn out the intruder myself; but I feared that my lack of Russian and Turki would make this difficult, and it would certainly rouse the establishment. All things considered, I decided to lie and watch for daylight, my matches being to my hand. After the unknown had turned over again I heard the regular breathing of deep slumber, and soon, contrary to my intention, I dropped off to sleep myself.

When I woke about seven o'clock it was quite light. Examining my bed with some trepidation, I found a space between it and the wall at each end. Behind my pillows was a heavy red felt, and pulling this up I came upon a makeshift bed with pillow and bedding underneath mine. The occupant had gone, and I discovered the place at the end of the bed where "it" must have crept out noiselessly through the open door!

I said nothing to our hostesses, who came straight from their beds to give us bread and coffee before we started. They rode with us for a couple of miles to speed us on our way, and I was somewhat surprised

to see that they merely pulled long coats over their night attire and muffled their heads in shawls before they mounted their horses. It was not until we had bade them farewell that I was able to relate my adventure to my brother and discuss this curious example of primitive Russian customs.

We parted from the ladies at the Kizil Su, the river that waters Kashgar, which we found very difficult to cross owing to the floes of half-melted ice in the middle of the stream and the broad ice shelves that protruded from either bank. We were now in Chinese Turkestan, and our halting-places changed considerably for the worse; indeed, the animals were relatively better housed than the human beings. Usually we rode into a small yard, two sides of which were given up to the ponies, while only dark rooms lit by a hole in the roof were reserved for travellers. The ceilings were unplastered, the interstices of the poplar beams being stuffed with hay, which as the weather grew warmer would be a haunt of scorpions and tarantulas. There was no furniture of any kind in these "hotels" with their crumbling mud walls and uneven floors, and I was always thankful when I slept in them that the "insect season" had not begun. It was not easy for me to sleep in these places, for the servants seemed to talk all night long; moreover, as my room was merely wattle-and-daub I could hear every movement of the animals on the other side of the thin walls, as they munched their fodder, fidgeted, and now and again screamed and tried to kick one another. I was also often roused from my slumbers by some cat that would leap down through the hole in the roof and would prowl about until my angry "Ssh!" frightened it

into departing, though it would probably return later and disturb me again.

At the first of these unprepossessing stages we were greeted by a *ya-yieh* or "yamen runner," who had been deputed by the Chinese authorities to escort us for the remainder of the journey. He was a striking figure, with a scarlet and yellow plastron on his chest denoting his official position.

Our onward route lay across many low passes, one I remember being crowned by a deserted fort, a memento of Yakub Beg, and clustered round this stronghold were many shrines—piles of stones adorned with wild sheeps' horns and with poles on which fluttered countless rags, the idea being to remind the buried saint to intercede for the giver of the scrap of cloth or cotton. After this we traversed a district strewn with conglomerate rocks which assumed the most fantastic and weird shapes, and we wound through a long defile where the loess hills were crimped and frilled, looking much like rows of ballet skirts flung one upon another.

The ranges decreased in height as we proceeded, the sandy detritus moving down on barren valleys in which we saw very little sign of life. There were the pretty snow pigeons, the ubiquitous crows, and occasionally magpies standing on the backs of a few goats, pecking the ticks from their hair as the animals fed on almost invisible herbage or gnawed the bark from branches of willows that were cut down for the purpose.

Ever since we had crossed the Terek Dawan the weather had been cold and windy, with frequent dust-storms, the sand driving in great red clouds across the treeless wastes, and enveloping us and our caravan in grit that made the eyes smart.

Farther and farther the hills receded until we emerged on to the great Kashgar plain, where at Miniol, our last halting-place, the irrigated fields were green with crops, the trees in leaf, clumps of irises about to burst into flower, lizards darting among the stones, and frogs chanting loudly from the water-courses. To give some idea of the size of the Tian Shan Range it may be mentioned that nine out of the twelve stages of our journey lay through mountains.

On April 10, the thirty-sixth day after leaving England, we rode across the stony plain towards a long green line on the horizon that indicated the goal of our journey, passing on our way an old watch-tower erected in bygone days on the edge of the Oasis to give due warning of Kirghiz raiders. Some miles out of the city a fine saddle-horse and a rickety hooded victoria met us. My brother mounted the one and I got into the other, to be jolted over stones and in clouds of dust towards Kashgar. As we entered the Oasis with its avenues of willow, poplar and mulberry that surrounded the town for miles, Sir George Macartney and his children appeared to welcome us, and we also had a greeting from the Indians, when we entered a garden and sat down at a table on which a lavish meal had been spread. We halted farther on to exchange greetings with the Swedish missionaries, then drove in the red dust to where the Russian Consul-General and his staff hospitably entertained us, and afterwards to the Chinese reception, where more tea had to be sipped. This was the last stopping-place, and it was with joy that I heard the children who shared my carriage say, as we skirted the castellated city wall, that we were at last nearing the British Consulate.

We drove into a large garden planted with trees, where Lady Macartney came down the steps of a big, pleasing house and, giving us the kindest of greetings, led us into the dining-room. Here it was so delightful to be once more in an English atmosphere and to talk to a countrywoman that I could not resist partaking of afternoon tea, though it was for the fourth time since we had entered the Kashgar Oasis.

CHAPTER III

LIFE AT KASHGAR

For stalking about the streets (of Leh) or seated in silent rows along the bazaar, were men of a different type from those around. Their large white turbans, their beards, their long and ample outer robes, reaching nearly to the ground and open in front showing a shorter undercoat girt at the waist, their heavy riding-boots of black leather, all gave them an imposing air; while their dignified manners so respectful to others, yet so free from Indian cringing or Tibetan buffoonery, made them seem like men among monkeys compared with the people around them.—*Visits to High Tartary, Yarkand and Kashgar* —ROBERT SHAW.

ON the second day after our arrival the Macartneys and their children left for England, but, busy though my hostess was, she found time to show me everything in the house and offices, giving me all sorts of hints that proved invaluable later on.

I was delighted with *Chini Bagh* (Chinese Garden), as the Consulate was called, the well-planned, airy house being set on low cliffs above the river. The large garden was full of fruit trees in blossom, its most charming feature being a terrace shaded by lofty poplars, from which we had a fine view of the river winding away to our right and could look down upon fields green with spring crops and watch the gaily clad people moving along the network of roads and paths. In fact we were so far above the world that I was sometimes reminded of the "Lady of

Shallot" and her magic mirror, the busy life passing below seeming almost like a vision when viewed from this post of vantage, where we ourselves were quite unobserved.

Another point that pleased me greatly about our new home was the fact that we could walk on the flat roof of the house, and every now and again, when the air was free of the all-pervading dust, we could enjoy a wonderful mountain panorama. The snow-clad monarchs rose up, peak behind peak, in indescribable grandeur, Kungur, as the natives called it, dominating the whole, and I little thought that a few months later I should be privileged to stand at the foot of these superb mountains and have an unforgettable glimpse of the "vision splendid." The Russians always insisted that the great dome of Muztagh Ata (Father of the Snows) could be seen from Kashgar, but Captain Deasy definitely settled by his survey work that this mighty giant was hidden by Kungur.

However, there was far more prose than poetry in my life at Kashgar, particularly at first, when I was occupied in coping with the details of housekeeping. I laboured under the disadvantage of being unable to speak Russian to the cook, or Turki to the other servants, but fortunately old Jafar Bai, who was entrusted with the purchases of supplies in the bazar, spoke Persian, and as I have a working acquaintance with that language he could act as my interpreter. To counterbalance my lack of tongues I had a fair knowledge of cooking and a good deal of energy, a quality useful in dealing with the slackness of the Oriental, particularly in Mohamedan countries, where a woman is obliged to hold her own, as her sex is of so little account. I speedily discovered that Achmet,

DAOUD AND SATTUR.

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a Russian engaged at Tashkent for the high sum of five pounds a month, was hardly a cook at all and could only make two or three soups and prepare the same number of meat dishes; his bread, moreover, was uneatable, and not a single pudding or cake found a place in his repertory! This was bad enough; but his unwillingness to learn, his lack of respect and his ceaseless wrangling with Jafar Bai, whose office he wished to usurp, made housekeeping a tiresome business. Before long it dawned upon me that to pay the wages of a *chef* and to be forced to do most of the work myself was not good policy, and when I discovered that Achmet had a weakness for alcohol I made up my mind to dispense with his services.

The kitchen-boy left by Lady Macartney had all the qualities that my late cook lacked, and I now entered upon a peaceful existence as far as the kitchen was concerned. Daoud *Akhun* (David, the Reader of the Koran, as his name implied) was a burly intelligent youth, and speedily grasped my Persian interlarded with Turki words. But he had no claim to his title of *Akhun*, as he could neither read nor write, and consequently I had to prepare every dish two or three times before he could remember the right quantities and be trusted to make it alone. My little Colonial cookery-book gave all the recipes in cupfuls or spoonfuls, a method that might with advantage be followed in England, as it is a great saving of time and trouble.

Sattur, the butler of the establishment, was a gnome-like little man, perfectly honest, but with the mind of a boy of twelve. The others called him *Mulla* Sattur, his title, like that of my cook, being due to the fact that his father had been a *mulla* or

priest, though he himself was entirely devoid of education.

He and his underling kept the house fairly well when looked after, but Orientals are incurably slack according to Western ideas, and it was a constant struggle to maintain a very moderate standard of cleanliness and order. At first I tried to teach him to sweep the painted floors by means of a damp cloth tied over a broom, instead of whisking the dust from one place to another; but he nearly wept, saying at intervals, "Not good, not good," so averse was he to innovations. As a waiter he had a tiresome habit of stretching his arm across us when serving food or drink, and he had a constitutional inability to put on the lid of a biscuit-tin or close a door. It was a proud moment when, after many a reprimand, he knocked at my bedroom door instead of bursting in without notice! Apart from these small failings he was very likeable, most conscientious, and somewhat resembling a dog in his desire for praise if he did anything well.

With all his virtues, he, on one occasion, nearly caused a disaster, as the following anecdote will show. Some years before our arrival, a British officer was in temporary charge of the Consulate, and as he was a bachelor the servants soon took advantage of the fact that there was no mistress. One day he found them going off to their respective homes laden with provisions from his store-room, and in righteous wrath he dismissed every one save Sattur, who had not joined in the depredations. The little fellow then united in his person the offices of cook, butler and housemaid, and apparently did so well that his master was emboldened to give a tea-party. The

guests arrived, but the *pièce de résistance* in the shape of rock-cakes was so long in appearing that the amateur cook was summoned. Sattur then explained with some perturbation that he was sure something was wrong with the baking-powder, because, although he had mixed in a double quantity with the flour, the buns utterly refused to rise. The captain demanded to see this curious baking-powder, and he and his guests had a shock when he discovered that it was the arsenic which he kept to cure the skins of the animals and birds that he shot!

One of the great drawbacks of the Turki is that they never wash. There are no public baths, as in Persia, nor does the rule of a weekly bath on Friday before going to the mosque hold good here. The only thing I could do was to insist firmly on clean garments and well washed hands and faces. All the servants wore very long sleeves in which they hid their hands to show respect to superiors. They were in the habit of using these sleeves as dusters, but had to roll them up when they did any work.

Jafar Bai, the head *chuprassi*, willing and trustworthy, was my marketer, but variety in diet was difficult to obtain when we had only the toughest of mutton and the stringiest of fowls on which to depend. We were warned that the beef was usually diseased, and as many cases of illness had occurred from eating the fish caught in the river — some being diseased and others apparently having a poison-gland — we never ventured upon that form of food, and no game was to be had until the autumn.

Fortunately eggs were abundant, and we obtained some butter and milk from our two cows, attended

by their calves, which took about half what their mothers yielded. As the small quantity of butter produced was barely sufficient for the table, I tried to supplement it by procuring cream from the bazar, but unluckily the Kashgaris do not practise cleanliness in any form. The cream was always distressingly dirty and had to be passed through muslin and then brought to boiling-point before it could be made into butter, and even then had an unpleasant smell and a dingy appearance. After various trials I resorted to suet for my cooking, and bought *dumba*, the big bunch of fat that forms the tail of the Central Asian sheep. On our arrival we found that owing to the War no white flour could be purchased in Kashgar, and we were obliged to have recourse to the native article, with its large admixture of grit and dust, before we could procure Russian flour from Osh.

The Swedes told me that when their mission was started in Kashgar some twenty years ago the prices of food were very low, there being practically no money in the country. In those days trading was done "in kind," but prices had trebled or even quadrupled in the last few years. Even so, I did not consider them exorbitant when I could purchase a small leg of mutton for 1s. 10d., soup-meat at 2½d. a lb., a fair-sized fowl for 8d., and eggs at about four a penny. Sugar, Russian bacon, cheese and suchlike imported things were naturally expensive owing to the difficulties of transport. The weights were a *jing* (1⅓ lbs.), 16 *jings* making a *charak* (21 lbs.), while the Russian *poud* was 36 lbs.

The prices were usually computed in *tangas*, a coin worth about 2d., which, to my great surprise,

did not exist. This mythical *tanga* equalled 25 *darchin*, while 16 *tanga* and 10 *darchin* made a *seer* —a coin worth about 2s. 8d. This sounds easy enough, but was complicated with the Chinese *tael*, the Indian *rupee* and the Russian *rouble*, all these coins being current in Kashgar.

The important question of the laundry was settled satisfactorily by a woman who arrived on Mondays and installed herself under a shelter in the yard where were basins and a fireplace. On Tuesdays the ironer made her appearance, the same woman being unable to see the clothes through both processes; and she was accommodated in a room with a long table, shelves on which to deposit the garments, and a supply of irons. Lady Macartney had warned me that this woman had a fondness for doing her work on a dirty cloth, and I soon found that she lived up to her reputation and would lay aside the clean sheet that I provided unless I looked in upon her at frequent intervals. Though she was a fair ironer she had no knowledge of starching, but we discovered a male artist who undertook to get up my brother's shirt fronts and collars, though he utterly declined to wash them. I paid both women some *tangas* extra on condition that they washed and ironed all the servants' cloths and dusters, my rule being to give out clean ones every Monday and Wednesday in exchange for their dirty ones; a plan that ensured as much cleanliness as I could reasonably expect.

Shortly before we left Kashgar for England our lady ironer departed without warning to another town, but the male artist kindly came to the rescue and took over her job. He used to make the most extraordinary noises, but I thought nothing

of them until I came into the ironing-room one day, carrying a dress that was creased. He laid it out on the ironing-board and to my horror began to eject a fine spray of water from his mouth upon it, making at the same time the noise that had puzzled me!

There was not much social dissipation at Kashgar, though there was a colony of fifty Russians, together with a body of sixty-five Cossacks and their officer. Out of these only a dozen made up "Society," and we met twice a week at the "Club," providing tea and cakes in turn. Here four of the men and my brother played tennis on a mud court, an adjoining court being laid out for croquet, where the rest of us played a game with wide hoops, a "cage" in the centre and small-headed mallets that took me back to the days of my early youth. Every one "spooned" and pushed the balls into position in a way contrary to every rule of up-to-date croquet and got quite excited over the games. It was curious to see the thoroughly inefficient way in which the servants swept these courts. Their method was to kneel down and brush up the sand with little twig brooms that they held in one hand, while with the other they collected the dust into heaps before piling it on one of the skirts of their long coats and so carrying it off.

Prince Mestchersky, the Consul-General, and his wife and staff were most friendly, and we were invited to a round of dinners and lunches, Achmet's incompetence giving me many an anxious moment when we returned the hospitalities lavished upon us. Unluckily for me, only four or five of the Russians could speak French or German, and as I

have no gift of tongues my attempts to learn Russian were far from successful.

This was rather trying, as the Russian entertainments ran to length. I always remember the first lunch party to which we were invited. It was given in a garden at some distance from the Consulate, and I drove there well swathed in cloak and veils, to avoid arriving with the complexion of a mulatto from the clouds of suffocating dust that rose up from the road. Driving was also a penance, owing to the rough roads along which one was bumped and jolted until one ached all over. Our goal was an enclosure full of fruit trees in blossom and planted with flowers, in which two long tables, placed on mud platforms covered with carpets, were spread with different kinds of wine, fruit, sweetmeats and so on. The Russian colony, including the three ladies in their smartest dresses, was assembled on a third platform hung round with Chinese embroideries. Scarlet awnings were stretched above the tables to keep off the sun, and when all the guests had arrived we sat at the first table for an hour and a half, while many *zakouskas* and course after course of meat were handed round and interminable toasts were drunk.

I am a water-drinker, but soon found that I should give offence if I refused to return the toasts in wine; so I did at Rome as Rome does, held my glass up, clinked it with other glasses, and sipped as occasion required. The Tsar's Prohibition Act had not found its way into Chinese Turkestan, and never have I seen such a bewildering array of bottles. The first toasts led off in vodka, after which different wines and liqueurs were served in unending succession. Among the guests was a savant who had spent some

years in the Gobi Desert copying ancient inscriptions, and had halted at Kashgar on his return to civilization. His exploits with the bottle were so remarkable that my table-companion said he must be slaking his two years' thirst at one go!

When we had sat till three o'clock at one table we were requested to adjourn to the second, where ices, sweetmeats, champagne and coffee, and of course cigarettes, were served. After an hour of this our host proposed that we should take a little *promenade de digestion*; so off we all went along dusty paths bounded by high mud walls and round freshly irrigated fields. To compass these latter we had to walk carefully on the top of the irrigation banks, the ladies finding this somewhat difficult owing to their heels of abnormal height. At one place we came to a ditch where the gentlemen insisted on helping us across, though it was a very small jump, but my companions had such extremely narrow skirts that they could not have done it unaided. On our return to the garden the Princess wished to wash her hands; so soap and towels were provided and in turn we held out our hands for a servant to pour water over them, our gallant host waving a bottle of eau-de-Cologne, with which he besprinkled the ladies.

My heart failed me when I saw tea in readiness, with cakes, biscuits and sweets galore, and I had to wrestle for some time longer with linguistic difficulties, thankful that three of those assembled could talk French fluently. When a surreptitious peep at my watch told me that it was half-past six, we took our leave amid many exclamations as to the extreme earliness of our departure from the lunch party!

Nice and friendly as the Russians all were, my brother and I led lives of such a different kind that we could not well coalesce. If we dined with them we could never leave before midnight, and they themselves said that they liked to stay on till five o'clock in the morning, the domestics serving up a supper, or rather an early breakfast, from the remnants of the dinner, and possibly they would stroll out to see the sun rise before they repaired to their homes. Owing to their love of late hours they did not rise till mid-day, and as they could not enjoy the cool of the mornings as we did, they used to "take the air" by moonlight.

They did not play bridge, and we could not learn their difficult card-game, nor was it possible to play a kind of loto with them, owing to ignorance of the language.

Those forming "society" lived apparently in one another's houses all day long, never liking to be alone, and the little colony reminded us of the Florentines rendered immortal by Boccaccio, who, when the plague was raging, left their city and went to a lovely garden outside its walls, caring nothing for the misery and death they had so skilfully avoided. In this case it was not a plague, but the World War, that our neighbours appeared to ignore, except now and again when the Germans approached some place where they had relatives or friends.

I cannot refrain from giving the menu of one of the dinners we gave the Russians, in order to show what Daoud and I could accomplish when working together:

MENU.

Hors-d'œuvres.

Caviare on toast. Salmon mayonnaise. Fried sausages.

Tomato Soup.

Meat Courses.

Chicken aspic. Steaks à la tournados. Indian curry. Vegetables.

Sweets.

Trifle. Jam tarts. Ices.

Savoury—Cheese straws.

Dessert.

A dinner such as this required my presence in the kitchen the greater part of two mornings, and the food had to be arranged with an eye to Daoud's capacities; for I fought stoutly against the Oriental habit of long waits between the courses. On these occasions I hired an assistant who did all that my cook would permit, and Sattur was supported by Jafar Bai and another *chuprassi* resplendent in scarlet and gold uniforms and snowy turbans. The clerk of the office, who spoke English and Turki, always read over the menu more than once to Daoud, and I insisted that the latter should repeat it in his turn, in order to be sure that he had memorized it correctly. When we were seated at table, my anxieties were by no means over; for, in spite of my coaching beforehand, the waiters were fond of getting into one another's way, and occasionally there were unseemly wrangles between Sattur, who considered that he was the head, and masterful Jafar Bai, who would sometimes wrench the bottles

of wine from him as he was endeavouring to fill up the glasses of our guests. But on the whole our dinners were not inferior to those given by the Russians with their larger and more experienced staffs, and our guests enjoyed coming to us, as some of our dishes, such as curry, were more or less a novelty to them.

I have always liked entertaining, but in this case the language difficulty used to leave me quite exhausted at the close of the evening, and with the depressed feeling that I could not make things go briskly. Both my brother and I took lessons from a young girl, the companion of the Princess, but as she was uneducated and knew no language save her own, I confess I did not get much benefit from her instruction, although I tried to make her teach me by the Berlitz method. She was, however, a help to my brother, who had studied the language at Meshed, where he had had a good deal of social intercourse with the Russian Consulate, and who only needed practice to talk easily.

The other Europeans consisted of a small body of Swedish missionaries, men and women, headed by Dr. Raquette, who, besides his medical work, has published a Turki grammar and dictionary. All the Swedes talked English and gave us much information about Kashgar and its inhabitants, in particular Mr. Bohlin, who accompanied us on many of our rides. They had a hospital and dispensary, doing most useful medical work, and had the only printing-press in Chinese Turkestan, from which they issued books printed in Turki for use in their schools throughout the province.

A medical missionary in the East may be of

incalculable benefit to thousands, and Dr. Raquette's successful operations for cataract, in particular, brought him patients from far Khotan. Unfortunately the Kashgaris were much under the influence of their *mullas* and of the native doctors, who, not unnaturally, objected to foreign methods, the result being that they often came to the Swedes only when they were at the point of death. Moreover, though they looked robust they seemed to have little strength to resist the inroads of disease, and any serious illness carried them off very speedily.

The mission was started a quarter of a century ago, Dr. and Mrs. Höegberg, whom we met later at Yarkand, being its oldest members. At first it met with persecution, the Chinese stirring up the Kashgaris to besiege the little community in their house, but fortunately Mr. Macartney, as he then was, rode to the rescue with his *chuprassis*, and some Russian Cossacks aided him in the work of driving off the mob.

The Kashgari roughs then wreaked their vengeance on the new hospital that was being built on the site which it now occupies, and every kind of threat was used to induce the missionaries to leave Kashgar; but they stood firm, and finally the Chinese official who was their enemy was recalled, and forced to rebuild the hospital at his own cost. His successor announced the change of policy by inviting the members of the mission to a great banquet, at which the much-esteemed swallows'-nest soup was served, and so the hatchet was buried for good.

I always thought that the apple-pie order of the mission buildings and the excellent fruit and vegetables grown in the garden were a good object-lesson

to the Kashgaris, and indeed they were not insensible of this, as the following anecdote shows. When one of the missionaries had engaged a servant he heard an old retainer remark to the new recruit: "You must be sure not to be dirty, because these people are so clean that if they are forced to say an unclean word they go immediately and wash out their mouths!" My informant also told me that a servant of one of the lady missionaries, being short of cash, took all her plates to the bazar and sold them. When she turned upon him in righteous wrath, he remarked: "Oh, mistress, you are not blaming me properly," and he actually poured out a string of most abusive epithets, inviting, nay imploring her to use them upon him!

Our days soon fell into a routine broken by the English post with its month-old newspapers, which we devoured eagerly. The Reuter sent across the passes from Gilgit gave us somewhat later information about the War, and the Russians received occasional telegrams; but their knowledge of geography was so limited that my brother had much difficulty in eliciting any clear statement as to what was going on.

Riding was our chief amusement, and we purchased two fine Badakshani horses of the breed described by Marco Polo, and were usually in the saddle by half-past seven. The morning air was delightfully cool, and the rides were wonderfully varied, a fresh one for each day of the month we used to say. There was also the sound of running water in the numberless irrigation channels as we rode under the trees along sandy tracks free from stones and ideal for cantering. An added charm was the fact that the walls enclosing gardens and fields were

quite low, and as a rule the crops were not fenced in at all, save by low banks of earth.

At first we used to be accompanied on our walks and rides by Bielka and Brownie, the dogs that the Macartneys had left in our care. Bielka was a powerful white animal rather like a wolf, and unluckily had such an unconquerable dislike to Europeans that he had to be chained up whenever visitors came to the house. On our arrival Lady Macartney "introduced" us to him by providing us with bits of meat to give him as a peace-offering, and we became excellent friends.

It was amusing on our walks to watch him and Brownie, the fat, easygoing spaniel; for the latter, an arrant coward, would pick quarrels with the pariah dogs and then call his comrade to his aid, the enemy fleeing in confusion as soon as Bielka appeared. But when we found that, if a Cossack rode past, the great dog would rush at him like a fury and try to tear him from his horse, and when on the same walk we had to race to the rescue of a young Russian couple, the edict went forth that our would-be guardian must be left at home. It went to my heart to refuse him when he implored me to let him escort us; for he was most charming to his friends and kept the Consulate free of thieves, as he roamed about the place all night.

Though the Consulate was close to the city wall, we could turn almost at once into shady lanes, bordered with irrigation channels, along which willows, poplars and mulberries grew luxuriantly; while on either side stretched fields green with lucerne and springing wheat, barley and maize. But all the growth and prosperity of the Oasis was entirely

dependent upon the water, and should this source of life fail great would be the devastation. One day we came upon a district where a big network of irrigation channels had run dry owing to the bursting of a dam, and hundreds of men were labouring against time to repair it and thereby save the trees and crops. The *corvée* system is in force in Chinese Turkestan, and although tyrannical according to Western ideas, it is certainly for the public benefit in such a case as this. The villagers are forced to repair all roads and water channels in their own districts, but the hardship comes in when their Chinese rulers undertake to reclaim land from the desert and commandeer men from considerable distances. They are supposed in such cases to be paid threepence a day for their food, but it is rumoured that this money usually goes into the pockets of the headmen.

The Kashgar Oasis is watered by the Kizil Su (Red River, so called from its colour) and its branch the Tuman Su, which make the city and its environs an island. In April there was little water in either stream, so we could ford them easily on horseback; but during the summer it was a different matter. We were warned to be on our guard for quicksands in these rivers. Mr. Bohlin was once nearly caught in one, but feeling his horse sinking beneath him he threw himself off in haste and wading waist-deep he pulled the animal ashore. On another occasion he observed several men trying to extricate a horse that had sunk so deeply that it took the whole day to free it. These quicksands are less to be feared in deep water which buoys the animals up. The Kashgaris always hurry their horses over any

suspicious place, but as the dangerous areas are constantly changing, it is impossible to be sure of their whereabouts.

Charming as spring is in Chinese Turkestan, it has a serious drawback in the violent sandstorms that are particularly frequent during March and April, in fact it has been computed that there are only a hundred really clear days during the year. For several days after our arrival the air was thick with dust that veiled the sun and accounted for the strictures passed by travellers on the "grey atmosphere" and depressing climate of Kashgar. Either by day or by night a furious wind would arise, bringing clouds of sand from the desert and coating everything in our rooms with a layer of reddish grit that hurt our eyes if we chanced to be caught in the open. I was told, however, that the inhabitants liked this haze that enshrouded their city as being a welcome change from the brilliant sunshine, and also as tempering the heat that was beginning to be considerable during the middle of the day. We noticed great changes in the temperature, sometimes experiencing a drop of as much as twenty degrees from one day to another. This I found out to my cost when I had a tiresome attack of rheumatism caused by riding on a cold morning in the thin linen coat that had been just the thing on the previous day.

These sandstorms raging through the centuries are supposed to have made the loess formation which is so characteristic of Chinese Turkestan, and so amenable to the spade of the cultivator when irrigated. The countless layers of compressed sand are capable of producing splendid crops, and the apparently lifeless desert of Central Asia is able to support large

WATERING HORSES IN THE TUMAN SU.

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populations if the beneficent agency of water be provided.

The loess is also most useful in another way; for, when mixed with chaff and water, it forms the staple building material of Chinese Turkestan, and edifices of sun-dried loess bricks will endure through the centuries, if repaired at intervals. I have often seen a peasant mending a wall in most primitive fashion by filling the breach with wet mud, which he slapped into position with his hands. Naturally this style of building is suitable only in a dry climate, and a prolonged period of heavy rain, such as sometimes occurs in winter, works havoc with it, the flat roofs of houses staving in and walls frequently collapsing. To the traveller, the loess, though picturesque when broken up into crevasses and castellated forms, has its drawbacks. Unless cultivated it is inexpressibly dreary, in dry weather the traffic stirs it up into clouds of suffocating dust, and in wet it turns into a sea of slippery mud, in which the surest-footed horse may come down. If the rain be of long duration the soil is apt to turn into a veritable morass, which engulfs many a poor little donkey and chokes it to death.

I was fond of riding through the bazar on a Thursday, the day of the weekly fair, when crowds of people poured in from the many hamlets in the Oasis, making a feast of colour. Among the men there was a great mixture of types, the upper-class Kashgaris usually having handsome features and full beards and moustaches; a group of Afghans with hawk-like profiles and proud bearing would catch the eye, reminding me of birds of prey when contrasted with the flat-faced, ruddy-cheeked, hairless Kirghiz;

and the lower classes with the high cheek-bones of the Mongol seemed a link between the Iranian and the Chinese.

The men wore long coats, purple, red, green, or striped in many colours, with gay handkerchiefs serving as waistbands. Snowy turbans denoted *mullas* and merchants, but the others in fur-edged velvet hats or prettily embroidered skull-caps made gay splashes of colour as they rode by on spirited stallions or donkeys. The women were, if possible, more brightly clad than the men; their under shirts and trousers contrasting with their coats and hats. One *belle*, for example, had an emerald green coat lined with a flowered pink cotton; her under-garment was a vivid orange, and her hat purple, with a spray of blossom coquettishly stuck under the brim. It seemed almost incredible, but she fitted in well with her surroundings in the brilliant sunshine and the spring green of foliage and crops.

The only visible differences between the dress of the men and of the women were the long white cotton shawls of the latter which they wore over their heads, and the small face-veils usually made of hand-embroidery, sometimes with a handsome border and fringe. These coverings were fastened to the brim of the hat, and were usually flung back over it, only to be hastily pulled down by some very orthodox dame at sight of my brother; but if I happened to be riding behind him it would usually be pushed aside to enable its wearer to have a good look at the English *khatun*. Girls of good family veil and are kept secluded; but there were few "gentry" in Kashgar, for when the Chinese retook the province on the death of Yakub Beg nearly all the upper-

KASHGAR WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

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class Kashgaris fled to Andijan. Both men and women wore abnormally long sleeves, answering the purpose of gloves in cold weather, and long leather riding-boots. The latter were often made of scarlet leather and were more like stockings than boots, and over them was worn a shoe with stout sole and heel. Indeed these long boots were seen everywhere and constituted a special feature of the country, being worn by men, women and children alike.

On one occasion I was invited to the house of a Turki lady who was kind enough to display her wardrobe for my benefit. All her dresses were beautifully folded and kept tied up in large cloths. A woman of fashion wears five garments visible to the eye, the first two being the long gown and the trousers under it. The gown is made of Bokhara or Chinese silk, brocade, Russian chintz and so on, and over it is worn a waistcoat, often of cloth of gold or silver, edged at the neck with the handsome gold thread embroidery made at Kucha. Then comes a short coat with long sleeves, usually of velvet woven in Germany and decorated with a broad band of gold embroidery. One black brocade coat that I saw was embroidered round the neck with big tinsel butterflies set with artificial stones. The fifth garment is a long velvet or brocade coat covering its wearer to the heels; I noticed a handsome one of magenta velvet, the buttons being big bosses of scarlet coral set in gold filigree and small pearls, a product of the Yarkand bazar. Draped on the head is a big white shawl, often of pretty gauzy material, that falls to the heels, and upon this are set the dainty skull-cap and the big velvet fur-edged cap. To this latter is attached the face-veil of fine-drawn

thread edged all round with gold embroidery, the very handsome broad band of needlework at the top being concealed by the brim of the hat. This seemed a waste to my practical English mind, but the lady to whom I pointed this out explained that such was the fashion.

Many of the young Kashgari women were most attractive in appearance, and some of the little girls quite lovely, their plaits of long hair falling from under a jaunty little embroidered cap, their big dark eyes, flashing teeth and piquant olive faces reminding me of Italian or Spanish children. One most beautiful boy stands out in my memory. He was clad in a new shirt and trousers of flowered pink, his crimson velvet cap embroidered with gold, and as he smiled and salaamed to us I thought he looked like a fairy prince. The women wear their hair in two or five plaits much thickened and lengthened by the addition of yak's hair, but the children in several tiny plaits.

The peasants are fairly well off, as the soil is rich, the abundant water-supply free, and the taxation comparatively light. It was always interesting to meet them taking their live stock into market. Flocks of sheep with tiny lambs, black and white, pattered along the dusty road; here a goat followed its master like a dog, trotting behind the diminutive ass which the farmer bestrode; or boys, clad in the whity-brown native cloth, shouted incessantly at donkeys almost invisible under enormous loads of forage, or carried fowls and ducks in bunches head downwards, a sight that always made me long to come to the rescue of the luckless birds.

It was pleasant to see the women riding alone on

WATER-CARRIERS AT KASHGAR.

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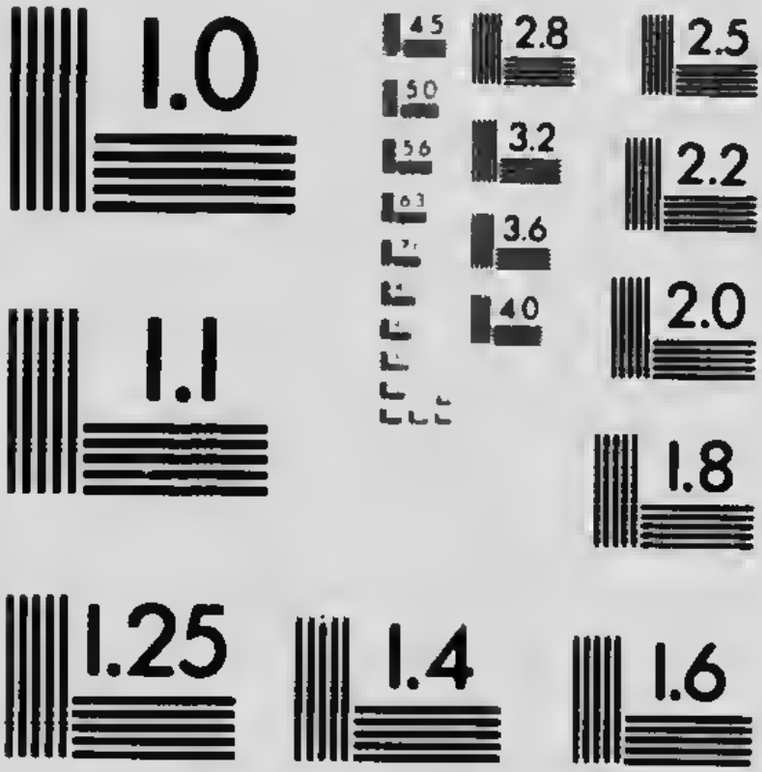
MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



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horseback, managing their mounts to perfection. They formed a sharp contrast to their Persian sisters, who either sit behind their husbands or have their steeds led by the bridle; and instead of keeping silence in public, as is the rule for the shrouded women of Iran, these farmers' wives chaffered and haggled with the men in the bazar outside the city, transacting business with their veils thrown back.

Certainly the *mullas* do their best to keep the fair sex in their place, and are in the habit of beating those who show their faces in the Great Bazar. But I was told that poetic justice had lately been meted out to one of these upholders of the law of Islam, for by mistake he chastised a Kashgari woman married to a Chinaman, whereupon the irate husband set upon him with a big stick and castigated him soundly.

Market day at Kashgar presented an ever-changing kaleidoscope. Here a turbaned grandfather bestriding a tiny donkey, his grandson clinging on behind him and holding tight to his waistcloth, would cross the imposing-looking bridge, a favourite haunt of the numerous beggars. On the river bank the dyers would be beating long pieces of cloth in the shallows; horses would be drinking standing knee-deep in the water, and at the ford loaded asses could be seen staggering across, and men and women with their garments kilted high wading to the opposite bank. Donkeys carrying covered tubs were ridden by children who scooped up the water in gourds and filled the receptacles that were to supply their households for the day. Small mites hardly able to do more than toddle, were fearless riders, sometimes two or even three children being perched on the

same animal. The excellence of the river brand accounts for the fact that cholera is unknown in Kashgar, and the inhabitants do not suffer from the goitre that is so prevalent in other cities of Chinese Turkestan.

The little stalls in the bazar exposed all sorts of commodities for sale. Melons that had been stored all through the winter; horseshoes or murderous-looking knives laid out on benches; here were small piles of almonds, walnuts and pistachios, there macaroni of native make and rice; and at one corner of the road the dyers hung up their blue and scarlet cloths to dry. As far as I could see the vendors made no effort to press their wares, and there seemed to be no fixed hours of work, men apparently sleeping, gossiping or drinking tea at any time of day. In the bakers' shops the ovens were big holes flush with the floor of the shop, and the baker stuck the flat cakes of dough against their sides and pulled them off when ready, with the aid of a long-handled iron instrument. The bread, the little be-glazed rolls in the form of rings, and the heaps of flour were all plentifully besprinkled by the dust of the traffic; and during the cold weather the children would squat all day close to these ovens and frequently tumble in and get terribly burnt, poor little things. There was always business doing at the forge, where the horses being shod were lashed so tightly to an ingenious wooden framework that they could not move. Unluckily the Turki farrier is more inclined to make the hoof fit the shoe than *vice versa*, and as a result often cuts away the wall in most unscientific fashion, as we sometimes found to our cost.

Partridges and the pretty little desert larks kept

SHOEING IN THE KASHGAR BAZAR.

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in small round cages called and twittered, but their notes would be drowned by the performance of a group of professional singers who had drawn a crowd round them. The leader in turban and silk attire, with a huge silver buckle on his belt, sang, or rather shouted, a solo with many a trill and tremulo, making excruciating facial contortions, the monotonous chorus being taken up by the rest of the troupe. Some of these were greybeards, others mere boys, but all had the appearance of undergoing acute torture as they yelled at the top of their voices, and brought to mind my old maestro who was in the habit of suddenly holding a mirror in front of me if I wore a pained expression as I sang.

Yet the Kashgaris have the reputation of being very musical, and even to my western ears there was considerable charm in many of their songs; but try as I might, I could never pick up any of their airs, probably owing to the fact that their notation is quite different from ours. They do not understand part-singing, but play several instruments, such as *sitars*, drums, pipes and tambourines. In the spring and summer men and boys would sing up to a late hour at night, and with the first glint of dawn I was often roused by cheerful peasants chanting on their way to work in the fields.

The people say that travelling dervishes bring fresh tunes to the towns, and that when the spring repertoire, for example, has been learnt by the inhabitants it will be succeeded by new tunes for the autumn and winter. There are sometimes no words to these refrains, each singer supplying his own, in the fashion of the Italian *improvisatori*. No woman of good repute may sing in public, and only once did

I hear a little girl of some eight or nine years old singing away to herself and evidently much enjoying the exercise. Whistling is not allowed even to children, but I could not find out whether the Kashgaris believed, as do the Persians, that it summons the demons.

As the Kashgari woman is spoken of as *khatun*, mistress, and sometimes as *khan*, or master, of the house, I thought that she had a far better position than her Persian sister; yet the law of Islam presses heavily upon her in many ways. Owing to the emigration of men from the Oasis there is a large surplus of women, and marriage is consequently cheap for a suitor. Parents often sell their daughter to the highest bidder in the matrimonial market without allowing her any freedom of choice. True, divorce may be had for a couple of *tungas* (about fourpence), but as the woman may not re-marry until a hundred days have elapsed, she often has difficulty in keeping herself meantime, although the man is supposed to return the dowry that he received with her at her marriage. If she has children she must take charge of any under seven years of age, but if they are above that age the husband looks after the sons and the wife has the daughters, the husband paying a maintenance allowance.

There is a law that, if the husband divorces his wife, the latter may take all the movables in the house, and as in the case of a merchant much of his wealth consists of carpets and brass utensils, he often finds it cheaper to take a second wife rather than divorce the first, who would make a clean sweep of the household plenishing. I confess that this law rejoiced me, as I always resented the state of

A KASHGAR GRANDMOTHER.

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inferiority to which Islam subjects my sex, and was glad that it gave them the advantage for once.

Kashgar is a great resort of traders, and the degrading custom of temporary marriages is in full force, a man often marrying a woman for a week or even a couple of days, the *mulla* who performs the ceremony arranging for the divorce at the same time. The missionaries told me that most of the women in Kashgar had been married several times, and this constant divorce leads to the wives taking whatever they can from their husbands and secreting it against a rainy day. And one cannot blame them; for, if a man wants to get rid of his helpmate, especially if she be old, he often ill-treats her in order to force her to divorce him and thus free him from the necessity of restoring her dowry. If she does this she may find herself in evil case without means of subsistence, and possibly unable to remarry.

How the children fare in all these matrimonial complications must be left to the imagination. Fortunately marriage is a far more stable institution in the villages, where monogamy is the practice and divorce uncommon. Here the women are more on an equality with their husbands, though on one occasion Mr. Bohlin saw a man guiding a plough to which he had harnessed his wife and a donkey!

The Chinese also practise polygamy; but they never divorce a wife if she be the mother of a son, and I understand that they do not approve of the practice at all, regarding it as the ruin of family life and as full of evil consequences to the children.

CHAPTER IV

ROUND ABOUT KASHGAR

Arabic is science, Persian is sugar,
Hindustani is salt, but Turki is Art.
Turki Proverb.

As soon as we had settled down at Kashgar we were anxious to explore the city and its environs, and Mr. Bohlin proved an invaluable guide in our various expeditions.

From its position the capital of Chinese Turkestan was a commercial centre from very early times. The town as we knew it is built on high ground above the Tuman Su and surrounded by a mud wall and a dry moat, but there are ruins of old Kashgar close by, and the Oasis has changed hands many times. The small traders and peasant proprietors, who form the bulk of the population, are by no means a warlike race, and have apparently accepted with equanimity the rule of whatever master fate might send them. Throughout the centuries it never seems to have occurred to the cities of what is now Chinese Turkestan that they might with advantage have combined against a common foe, instead of letting themselves be subjugated piecemeal.

Perhaps the earliest mention of Kie-sha, as it was then called, was when the famous Chinese

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PRIEST AT THE TEMPLE OF PAN CHAO.

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general Pan Chao in the first century of our era conquered the Oasis and marched his armies almost as far as the Caspian. Accordingly we made our first expedition to the picturesque temple erected by the Chinese to this hero, who, we were told, defended the city most valiantly against fierce attacks from the Kirghiz tribes. This monument is quite modern, the Mohamedan conqueror Yakub Beg having destroyed the original temple during the 'sixties, and the legend that places the remains of the great soldier in the high mound on which the temple stands is open to doubt.

The dirty, black-clad priest in charge of the building pointed out to us the gods in their ill-kept shrines, life-size plaster figures clad in gorgeous silken robes with finger-nails of monstrous length. The god of war was a jet-black deity of peculiarly repulsive appearance, and all had stands before them in which worshippers could burn joss-sticks. There was an upper story to the temple, which we reached by means of a rickety wooden staircase not fastened to the wall in any way, and giving me the impression of being a most insecure mode of communication, and here I remember the quaint figure of the god of schoolboys, appropriately armed with a formidable cane. But the view was what held us enchained. From our post of vantage we could see over the entire town, with its shrines and mosques standing out from the thousands of mean, flat-roofed, mud dwellings, and as the sky was clear that morning the serrated peaks rose up grandly, ramparts, as it were, of the Roof of the World, that we were to visit later on.

We looked down upon the castellated city wall,

which is some eighteen feet wide between its high parapets, and I was told the legend according to which it was built by half-starved slaves who were urged to their task by overseers armed with whips. If one of the labourers died, as frequently happened, his fellows were not allowed to remove the body, but were forced to build it into the wet mud in order that it might form part of the fabric, and the narrative haunted me when I stood upon the wall itself.

Though modern artillery would bring down this defence of the city, and the outer moat is always dry, as water would undermine the ramparts, the wall with its square bastions has nevertheless an imposing appearance: so also have the four great bronze-covered gates giving entrance to the town, which are shut at sunset to the accompaniment of Chinese crackers.

The centre of Moslem veneration is *Hazrat* Apak, the shrine where the Priest-King of Kashgar, who died at the end of the seventeenth century, is buried, together with many of his descendants. Apak not only ruled over Chinese Turkestan, but had disciples in China and India. He was credited with powers of healing, and even of bringing the dead to life, and the Kashgaris regard him as second only to Mohamed and count him equal to *Hazrat* Isa (Jesus Christ): he is said to have converted many thousands from Buddhism to Islam. The road leading to the shrine is a vast cemetery, about two miles in length and stretching some distance inland on either side, and along this *Via Appia*, as Sir Aurel Stein has named it, burial is a costly affair and can be afforded only by the well-to-do. The domed mud tombs have an underground chamber in which are four niches, and

KASHGAR CITY.

(Showing the city wall and Tuman Su.)

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WOMEN AT THE SHRINE OF *HAZRAT APAK.*

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here the principal members of a family are buried, each body being laid in turn in the receptacle that faces Mecca. As we passed along the road we heard women weeping loudly at some of the graves, in reality performing a kind of ancestor worship in imitation of their Chinese masters and not in accordance with Moslem practice. The idea is that deceased relatives will take more interest in the welfare of the survivors than do the saints, and accordingly the graves of the former are visited on holidays, and in this particular city of the dead also on Fridays and Saturdays. If any special blessing has been vouchsafed to a family, such as recovery from illness or a safe return from a journey, its members go in a body to express their gratitude at the tomb of parent or ancestor.

A number of beggars ran after our horses along this road; some of them dwell in small houses in the cemetery and are paid to keep certain graves in order. It is hinted that when the tombs crumble away these men are in the habit of turning them into dwellings, in order to sell the land again for burial plots after a decent interval has elapsed.

We dismounted at the imposing-looking gateway leading to the shrine, and were received by the *mutawali bashi*, or chief custodian, who takes a third of the large revenues, and a couple of turbaned, green-robed *shaykhs*. These escorted us up a poplar avenue past a big tank of water to a large building with a façade covered with blue and white tiles bearing Arabic inscriptions, the dome and the borders of the façade being in green, which contrasted curiously with the main colour scheme.

This was the famous shrine, and we were invited

to step inside, where we saw a crowded mass of blue-tiled tombs, that of the Saint-King being draped with red and white cloths. There were numbers of flags and banners before the tombs, and on one side was a palanquin in which a great-grandson of Apak had travelled to and from Peking. While there he had married his daughter to a Chinaman, and at the date of our visit a Celestial had arrived in Kashgar accompanied by a band of relatives, to demand his share of the great wealth of the shrine. His credentials were unexceptionable, and during a century and a half his ancestors had been given pensions by the Chinese Government; but owing to the revolution these subsidies had been stopped. Hence his appearance, which was causing much perturbation among the managers of the shrine funds.

We were shown the pool where the saint was wont to make his ablutions before praying, and close by was a great trophy of the horns of *ovis poli* and other wild sheep, the offerings of many huntsmen. There were two wooden mosques in the enclosure, the roofs and pillars of the verandahs being carved and brilliantly coloured in the characteristic native fashion. Between them once lay the grave of Yakub Beg, but when the Chinese recovered Turkestan they destroyed the tomb and flung away the ashes of that masterful ruler.

On another occasion we visited the Chinese cemetery, which was very small when compared with the acres round *Hazrat* Apak that are covered by Moslem tombs. But the rulers of Chinese Turkestan are conspicuous by their absence in Old Kashgar and, moreover, they are always anxious, if possible, to have their remains interred in their native land.

The enclosure, surrounded by a high wall, had usually a custodian of most hideous appearance standing at the open gateway, and the place had a tragic story attached to it. It was called *Gul Bagh* (Flower Garden), and was formerly the cantonment of Chinese troops in Kashgar. But when Yakub Beg wrested Turkestan from China he killed many soldiers of the Celestial Empire, and their remains were left unburied within this enclosure until the Chinese regained the Province in 1877. Then all the scattered bones were collected and placed under three big mud domes, the site of the former barracks being turned into a graveyard for Celestials.

Just inside the entrance was a temple with a wall on which was an inscription to keep off evil spirits, and at the end of each long, low, mud tomb was a tiny door facing south, through which the spirit of the dead man was supposed to emerge. In the mortuary chambers near the gate were placed the corpses of rich men who wished to be buried in China and whose coffins were awaiting fitting escort for the long journey.

I was told that when a Chinaman of importance dies, or, as it is put poetically, "drives the fairy chariot on a long journey," the body is kept in the house for several days, during which a priest offers up prayers before it, music being played and crackers let off. At the funeral a cock is brought to the cemetery on the coffin and killed at the moment of burial, in order that the spirit of chanticleer may be ready to waken the spirit of the dead man in the next world. Paper houses, attendants, soldiers, horses, carriages, beds, boxes, money—in fact every kind of thing pertaining to the daily life and use of

the deceased—are burnt before the coffin, in order that the spirit may have all these in the next world and may thus be enabled to take its proper position there. In the case of a wealthy man this ceremony is repeated on the three anniversaries following his death, and in front of a temple outside Kashgar a small pagoda-like tower was pointed out to me in which masses of paper prayers were burnt for the benefit of the deceased founder.

The Chinese are not considered particularly brave, but, though a man will avoid death by any possible means, yet he will meet it calmly when inevitable, and suicide is looked upon as rather a meritorious act than otherwise. If a man is condemned to death he is strangled; but for serious crimes short of murder the culprits are beaten severely on the legs, and men who have expiated their misdeeds in this way have frequently been brought into the Swedish hospital with their leg-bones broken in two or three places, and in some cases so badly injured that death ensues.

"There is something of a baby and something of an old man in every Chinaman," quoted Mr. Bohlin on one occasion, and I was naturally interested when we were entertained at a lunch given by the *Taoyin*, or Governor, of Kashgar. The invitation, written on a strip of scarlet paper, described my brother as *Sa Ta-jen* (the Big Man), while my title *Gu Ta-tai* (Sister of the Big Man) appeared below.

I had hoped that we were bidden to a real Chinese dinner where sharks' fins, swallows' nests and such like delicacies would figure in the menu, though I was somewhat staggered at being told that a first-class dinner would comprise no fewer than a hundred and

twenty courses, second and third class banquets having sixty and thirty courses respectively. No wonder that after such orgies the yamen is wont to remain closed for three days. But in this case, though the dinner lasted with an interlude from one o'clock to four, it was, as far as the food went, an inferior Russian repast. It began with many *zakuskas*, consisting principally of dubious-looking tinned fish, followed by soup, several meat courses, jelly, ices, tea and champagne. The Russian Consul-General and his staff were present, and all the Europeans were placed on one side of a long table under an awning, while their Chinese hosts sat opposite. These latter amused me by getting up at intervals. Some would take the Governor's children on their knees—he was the proud father of four sons—and give them tit-bits from the table; others smoked opium in curious pipes and had choking fits, during which they retired into the garden to cough in peace; while others would leave the table to give instructions to the servants in charge of two gramophones that discoursed popular European airs all the time.

The commander-in-chief, a quaint-looking figure with grey locks, a putty-coloured complexion and claw-like nails that made me shudder, strolled up and down in a khaki uniform and made amiable remarks to the guests; other officials rose to ply all and sundry with vodka and wine, and the only one that kept his seat was a small boy clad charmingly in blue and purple silk and wearing a sailor hat woven in blue and mauve straw. He ate manfully of every course, and even demanded a second helping of some of the more indigestible of the delicacies, but looked so strong and rosy that I suspected he was not

accustomed to indulge his appetite in this way very often.

There is a great mortality among Chinese babies if their mothers are unable to feed them ; for Celestials have the strongest repulsion to cows' milk. "We do not wish to become calves," they say, and if a mother dies her offspring is nourished on rice and sugar.

There was a crowd of soldiers at this party, some quite aged men, clad in black cotton uniforms, their heads bound up in handkerchiefs and holding curious weapons, such as steel prongs at the end of long sticks, and all having a highly unmilitary appearance. The army is looked down upon in China, it being a common saying, "We do not make nails from good iron or soldiers from good men," and in consequence of this strong pacifist feeling no man of decent standing would enter the profession of arms, except in the higher ranks where successful generals have temples built in their honour.

Our host gave the European ladies fans and silk handkerchiefs as souvenirs, showing us how to unfurl a fan to its full extent with a movement of the wrist, and then escorted us to the house to visit his wife, who met us at the entrance. She was a pleasant-faced lady, with well-oiled hair brushed back from her forehead, and was dressed in a black silk coat and tightly-fitting trousers. As she clambered with difficulty over the extremely high door-step, and tottered towards us on the tiniest of feet, I was unkind enough to reflect that my Russian friends with their narrow skirts and heels of abnormal height did not progress much better.

We were invited to drink tea in a room adorned with a couple of charming Chinese pictures, together

CHINESE SOLDIERS AT THE KASHGAR YAMEN.

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with a mass of European photographs and knick-knacks in bad taste, and afterwards passed into two large bedrooms, where we were received by the daughter-in-law, and inspected huge bedsteads hung round with curtains and furnished with long silk-covered bolsters and neatly-folded piles of silken quilts. My entire ignorance of the language prevented me from enjoying this glimpse of a Chinese home in the way I might otherwise have done, and my thoughts centred on the neat little "hoofs" shod in black satin that served our hostesses for feet. I had heard Mrs. Archibald Little lecture on this fashion, and her account of the tortures inflicted on so many thousands of tiny girls to bring about the repulsive mutilation which the Chinese euphemistically call "golden lilies" had filled me with an abiding indignation. And yet a recent traveller in China says that these crippled feet possess for him a "quite extraordinary exotic charm," and he exhausts himself in conjecture as to which mistress of an Emperor's heart introduced a custom that "entailed a new charm on her sex." I have no theory to offer as to the origin of the custom, but from the position of women in China it seemed to me that some man must have been responsible for a plan that would firmly tether his womankind to their homes, just as the veiling of Mohamedan women was a masculine device.

During our visit to his house the Governor, who could talk Russian, kept the ball rolling with Princess Mestchersky while we sipped our tea. He had met her some years before in China and afterwards she quoted to me one of his remarks, of which she had not entirely approved. He had said, "When we

were in China we were young, but now in Kashgar we are old!" I thought the Governor distinctly lacking in tact, but how easily can one jump to wrong conclusions through ignorance. Later on I heard that there is such reverence for age in the Celestial Empire that it is a high compliment to impute many years; an aged man, even if poor and blind, being regarded as a fortunate being. To this veneration for age is united an intense respect for parents, especially for the head of a house. No son would retire to rest before his father, nor would he sleep upon the roof if his parent occupied a room below.

The death of a father is one of the greatest calamities that can befall a man, and Sir Aurel Stein illustrated this by an incident that occurred when he was returning to Kashgar from one of his long desert expeditions. It became known that his Chinese interpreter's father had passed away, and all along the road there was a friendly conspiracy to keep all letters from Jongsi until his journey was at an end and he could indulge his grief at home.

When we said good-bye to our host we drove off, as we had arrived, to the accompaniment of three loud detonations, and this time the crackers were exploded so close to us that I marvelled that our horse did not smash the carriage and its occupants in its terror.

Later on my brother attended real Chinese feasts, where the procedure was quite different from that I have just described. He would drive into the outer courtyard of the yamen, where musicians would be discoursing weird music from a latticed gallery, and the great doors of the inner courtyard would be

JAFAR BAI DISPLAYING THE VISITING CARD.

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flung wide to the deafening sound of crackers. The etiquette was to leave the carriage and proceed across a stage with an altar on one side, Jafar Bai walking ahead waving his master's red visiting-card, and calling out his name and title, while the *Amban* met his guest half-way and escorted him to the repast. My brother's name, as rendered in Chinese, was *Si-Ki-Su*, and we were told that it is considered *chic* to have a name of two or three syllables, whereas a name running into four is not good and a five-syllable name would expose its bearer to derision, as the slip of paper on which it was written would be so long. The custom of visiting-cards is supposed to have originated in the Celestial Empire centuries before the coming of Christ.

As is the habit in Persia, the Chinese spend about half-an-hour before the meal in discussing fruit, nuts, tea, wine and native spirit, this last being served hot and poured from a kettle. The host takes the lowest seat at table, helps his guests to tea, putting in the sugar with his fingers. Later on he serves them to the various dishes and is full of attentions towards them. The dinner proper is placed on the table in bowls, from which every one supplies himself by means of chopsticks, fishing out what he fancies and transferring it to the small saucer placed before him.

Sharks' fins, turtle fat, a *plat* prepared from the stomach of a fish, fried fowls' livers, year old eggs, edible seaweed and preserved duck were some of the numerous dishes. My brother always carefully avoided this last, as the Consulate interpreter had had an illness which resulted in deafness from partaking on one occasion too freely of the delicacy, and perhaps it was this comestible that caused Captain Deasy to

write so feelingly of the ill-effects that he experienced from Chinese banquets. Swallows'-nest soup is almost unprocurable nowadays and prohibitive in price ; bread is seldom served, and if it appears it is rather like dough.

When the meat courses are concluded the servants bring in a basin of water in which they wash all the chopsticks and spoons, and then the sweets appear, beans in syrup and a kind of plum-pudding being among them. The last course is a bowl of rice, the national dish ; when it makes its appearance it is a sign that the feast has reached its close, and after partaking of it the guests depart.

Sir George Macartney told me that the Chinese are very fond of playing games with their fingers at their dinner-parties. One game is for a man to put forward a certain number of his fingers, his opponent doing the same, and he who first guesses the total correctly is the winner, the whole being done at lightning speed. The guests do not call out five, six or seven as the case may be, but there are elegant titles for each number, such as Mandarin of the First Empire, and so on. Another curious game is as follows : The hand, when clenched, is supposed to represent a stone, two fingers protruded stand for scissors and two hanging down for a sack. The point of the game is that a *stone* cannot be cut by *scissors* but can be put into a *sack*, but on the other hand, a *sack* can be cut by *scissors*. If, therefore, a player responds with *scissors* to his adversary who has clenched his hand for *stone* he loses ; but if he replies with *sack* he wins. It sounds a childish amusement, but the Chinese will play the game for hours at a time with tremendous zest.

I have omitted to mention that there is usually a length of wall placed in front of the gateway leading to any yamen, temple, rest-house, or graveyard, its purpose being to prevent evil spirits from entering. Most fortunately these can only go straight forward and cannot turn corners, so the wall brings them to a full stop and foils them in any malignant design.

The "name day" of the Tsaritsa fell early in May —Russians keep the baptismal day, and not the birthday, as we do—and the Cossacks attached to the Russian Consulate gave in her honour a display of horsemanship known as *jigitofka*. It was held on their sandy parade-ground close to the river, where the Russian colony assembled in full force. The men went through quite a military tournament programme, springing off and leaping on to galloping steeds, riding at breakneck pace facing the tails of their mounts, and leaping across kneeling camels. The "ships of the desert" strongly objected to this particular feat, and with loud roarings struggled to rise, until the men who held them bound cloths over their eyes. There were the usual V.C. races, and we had a glimpse of the war in watching the exciting rescue of a Cossack attired as a woman from the hands of a troop masquerading as Huns. The most sensational item was when the soldiers galloped their horses through a big barrier of flaming bundles of reeds, firing off blank cartridges, the sight of the flames and the noise of the rifles driving the animals almost mad.

The Princess gave away the prizes, chiefly money, daggers, and huge silver watches, and the simple-looking, fresh-faced youths rode past in a body when

all was over, singing beautifully. They had a natural gift for song, taking parts as if by instinct, and on quiet evenings I used to listen for their hymn.

The Kashgaris had assembled in hundreds to see the spectacle, and opposite to where we sat the high loess cliffs were crowded with brilliantly clad spectators, who climbed with the agility of monkeys to apparently inaccessible points of vantage. Horsemanship naturally appeals strongly to a nation of riders; but the Kashgaris, though as it were born in the saddle, never appeared to use their horses otherwise than as a means for getting about, in contrast to the young Persian or Arab, who is for ever racing his steed. Later on we saw much of the "goat game" as practised by the Kirghiz, but the only horses which were galloped in Kashgar were ridden by Cossacks, who occasionally ran riot in the narrow public roads, to the imminent danger of passers-by.

Our Russian friends drove instead of riding, and, as my brother and I much preferred our saddles to being jolted in a carriage, we never organised any joint-picnics. To be perfectly frank, a dinner or a garden-party always left me quite exhausted in my efforts to play the hostess, talking French to this one, helping out the inadequate German of that one, and cudgelling my brains for some Russian sentence of welcome to those guests, alas, in the majority, who knew no language save their own. The Russians enjoyed coming to our garden, especially when the strawberries were in season, and I always took them over the house, winding up with the roof for the sake of the view. The ladies were specially interested in the kitchen arrangements, and the Princess declared that

the Consulate was far more convenient in every way than the grandiose building that was in course of erection for her future residence. When my brother and I went over it later I was struck with the difference between British and Russian ideals. We love comfort and privacy in our homes, but our Slavonic friends appeared to need constant social intercourse. They had crowded many buildings on to a small piece of ground, each house raked by the windows of the others, and at the end of a long avenue stood the imposing-looking Consulate. I was surprised at its internal plan; for there were four very large reception rooms, but only three fair-sized bedrooms and a couple of small servants' rooms. There was apparently no pantry, scullery, larder or storeroom; and, as there was no central passage in the house, all the rooms opened one into another, an intolerable arrangement according to English ideas.

We were also shown over the Cossack barracks close by, big rooms with rows of grey blanketed beds, the long tables and benches for meals being in the same apartments, and the icons in a prominent position. The Cossacks all looked healthy and hardy, replying to their officer's salutations with a formula of greeting that they chanted with precision, but I fancy that Kashgar must be a place of exile to men who have left their farms on the Don at the bidding of the Tsar, and they must look forward to settling down upon them for good when their term of service is ended.

Shortly after our arrival we had an interesting guest in the person of M. Romanoff, a young Russian archaeologist whom my brother had met both in London and Bokhara. He was studying the Moslem

art of Central Asia, and showed us carvings, pottery, carpets and embroideries that he had bought at Kashgar and Yarkand, and was consequently able to help us with our own purchases.

The old Khotan carpets, their colours made from vegetable dyes, were attractive, and the silk carpets are highly prized and very difficult to obtain. One belonging to our guest had a pale yellow colouring, but was terribly damaged. The best woollen Khotan carpet that I inspected had a pattern in a series of panels; indigo, a faded-looking madder and yellow being the chief tints. There were Chinese vases in the design, and also the conventionalized *swastika*, that symbol of good luck which originally came from India, and which later on I saw copied *ad nauseam* in glaring aniline dyes. Certainly none of the old carpets that I came across, whether woven of wool or of silk, could compare in design, colouring or texture with the beautiful Persian works of the loom with which I was familiar. The modern Khotan carpet, with its aniline dyes, is rarely pleasing to the eye. A favourite subject is a row of magenta, purple and orange pots, with flowers stiffly protruding from them, the whole design being thrown upon a scarlet background and making one wonder how the artistic Chinese can descend to such depths.

The pottery brought to us for sale and sold in the bazars was rough and not particularly good as to pattern, while the tiles on the façades of mosques and those that covered a few of the tombs were practically all white and blue, comparing unfavourably with the fine work of much of Central Asia. What specimens of jewellery I saw were heavy and clumsy and to me devoid of charm. The native art

STUDY OF KASHGAR WOMEN.

(One woman is shown with face veiled.)

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seemed to find its chief expression in the columned verandahs of mosques and dwelling-houses, the pillars and roofs of these being often profusely carved with charming patterns in the style known as chip-carving; and also in the fretwork of doors and windows, frequently carried out with a wealth of intricate design that reminded us strongly of the art of Kashmir, and may possibly have been influenced by that country.

The old brass and copper utensils are often very beautiful, with open metal work showing Persian influence; in fact my brother and I sometimes thought that they must have been brought from Iran, so much did they resemble those we had picked up at Kashan.

It seemed to me that the embroideries produced by the women were more typical of the race than anything else. Shaw mentions that in the 'sixties the women wore wide trousers, the borders of which were embroidered, and though the trousers are now narrower and worn without adornment, we were able to collect many specimens of the old work. Moreover, the long gowns worn by the women were formerly profusely embroidered, conventional flowers appearing with charming effect on the red, green or yellow silk of which the costume was made. Now, alas, this beautiful handicraft seems almost to have died out, and is reserved for the pretty skull-caps which are worn by both sexes, and over which both alike place the "little pork-pie hat" with fur border mentioned by Shaw.

In spite of the Turki proverb that heads this chapter, it appeared to me that Chinese Turkestan had evolved no art of its own, everything of the kind

being influenced by its neighbours, China, India or Persia.

The province is a back-water of the Chinese Empire, and the race of petty farmers who inhabit it cultivate the soil as if by instinct. The so-called cities are comparatively small towns, where the trade is not on a large scale. They are separated one from another by the Takla Makan desert, and have been conquered and re-conquered during their whole history at bewilderingly short intervals, an experience which does not make for progress in art.

We rode all over Kashgar and its environs, and also visited every building of any pretensions in Yarkand and Khotan, but found nothing of real architectural merit; nor could any mosque or shrine compare with the magnificent monuments of India or Persia. As to Chinese architecture, it must be borne in mind that the conquerors would scarcely raise fine temples in a country which they looked upon as a land of temporary exile; moreover, buildings constructed of mud crumble away in the course of centuries, and it has been the custom of some of the many rulers of Turkestan to destroy the places of worship erected by those of another religion. For example, Yakub Beg, when he made himself ruler of Turkestan, set to work to raze all Chinese monuments to the ground, and perhaps the two ruined Buddhist *stupas* to the north and south of the Consulate owe their dilapidated condition partly to the fury of the early Mohamedan conquerors. At present these *Tims*, as the Kashgaris call them, are shapeless mounds giving no idea of their original form. Sir Aurel Stein, who has carefully examined them, believes that they date from between 600 and 800 A.D.; but

RUINS OF THE BUDDHIST *ZIAT*, KASHGAR.

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too little was left for him to have any opinion as to what they looked like when erected. It seems curious that, although Kashgar is supposed to be on the site of Kie-sha, visited by Hiuen-Tsiang, yet these two *stupas* are apparently all that remains of the hundreds of Buddhist monasteries that he mentions.

CHAPTER V

OLLA PODRIDA

It is doubtful if these Central Asian towns *ever* change. Their dull mud walls, mud houses, mud mosques look as if they would remain the same for ever. In most climates they would be washed away, but in Central Asia there is hardly any rain and so they stay on for ages. . . .

"As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be," would be a particularly appropriate motto to place over the gateway of a Central Asian town.—*The Heart of a Continent*, Sir F. YOUNGHUSBAND.

WE arrived at the capital of Chinese Turkestan in the spring, with the best of the year before us. The trees that bordered the countless irrigation channels were all in leaf, the *jigdah*, or Babylonian willow, was bursting into flower with gusts of perfume, one species bearing later on a yellow fruit something like a date in appearance and called *nan*, or bread, by the Kashgaris; the sickly-sweet white, and the big purple mulberries were ripening; the fields brilliantly green with lucerne and young corn, and the many gardens enclosed by low mud walls pink with fruit blossom. The picturesque loess cliffs—such a characteristic feature of Chinese Turkestan—broke up the country in every direction and the two branches of the river added great charm to the landscape, the frequent haze of dust giving a curious glamour to the scene.

During our rides outside the city we often came across some little mosque with carved wooden columns and roof, the building overlooking a large *hauz* or tank of water planted round with tall silver-stemmed poplars, or a vacant space in some village lane would be occupied by a huge spreading poplar, or the beautiful elm of the country, or the rather rare weeping-willow. There were few flowers to be seen, save the small mauve irises that were always found in the graveyards, where they spread themselves in sheets of blue among the tombs; but along the sandy tracks big bushes of wild roses with their faint scent reminded us of home.

There were plenty of birds, hoopoes and doves being the commonest, if one excepts the ubiquitous crows and sparrows; the cuckoo was heard occasionally and the swallows skimmed after flies. I was interested in a pair of hawks that had made a rough nest in a tall poplar in the garden, their wild "keening" sounding all day long as they came backwards and forwards with food for their offspring. On one occasion they attacked M. Romanoff as he was standing on the terrace below their nest and looking through a pair of field-glasses. He said that they swooped down upon him again and again, brushing his head with their wings and uttering piercing cries, and they even pursued him to the roof of the Consulate whither he retreated to continue his survey of the country. His idea was that the hawks must have imagined the glasses to be a weapon directed at the nest. Mr. Bohlin once observed one of these birds swoop down in the midst of the crowded bazar and snatch a piece of meat from a boy, and he had often seen men washing the carcasses of sheep in

the river and calling to the hawks that caught bits of offal flung into the air.

There were only harmless snakes in the Oasis, and not many of them. The boys were fond of winding them round their heads under their skull-caps, and they keep them in their shirts. On the other hand, the big six-inch-long lizards were feared, as their bite was said to be very poisonous. We sometimes saw the pretty jerboa, and there is a kind of small rat indigenous to the country, called "bag-mouth" by the natives, from its habit of filling the pouches in its cheeks with grain that it stores away. On one occasion Mr. Bohlin discovered that a large box of garden-seeds was nearly empty, and setting a watch he caught the ingenious little thief busily filling its pouches. On killing it he recovered a surprising quantity of the stolen goods!

The newly built Consulate was agreeably free from scorpions, which usually come out at night and can move at a great rate with a curious rustling noise; but we had plenty of spiders. The very large ones that could run at lightning speed I was assured were harmless; but one of the missionaries told me that the pain she had suffered from this spider's bite was intense, and that her finger had had a lump on it for many a long day after. An entomologist endorsed her experience, saying that these were hunting spiders, and killed their prey with a bite that was poisonous. Their size may be judged from the fact that Mr. Bohlin once saw a sparrow try to attack one, but the spider defended itself by waving its legs, and by this manœuvre apparently so much alarmed the bird that it flew off! I used to call Sattur to the rescue when my rooms were invaded by one of these creatures,

and he often had an exciting chase with the broom before he could dislodge his agile prey from its niche, its long leaps filling me with fear lest it might alight upon my head and then wreak vengeance upon me. Finally, it would be caught in a cloth and flung outside the house, my henchman refusing to destroy it, as the world-wide superstition that it is unlucky to kill a spider holds good in Kashgar. A comparatively small, but very hairy spider, I was told, was extremely poisonous. Great black bees and dragon-flies flew about the garden, big horse-flies often attacked our mounts as we rode, and, when the first cold of autumn set in, we suffered from a regular invasion of wasps crawling about on windows and floors, all in a half-torpid condition.

During the summer it was almost impossible to read in the evenings, because a light attracted swarms of midges, little beetles and other insects; but we could sit or walk on the terrace in the darkness unmolested, nor were we troubled by mosquitoes.

Until I became accustomed to it, the noise of Kashgar disturbed me a good deal. At dawn the whole world was up and about, men and boys singing lustily, or yelling at their donkeys, which from their continual braying are nicknamed the "nightingales of Kashgar," the bird of the poets not being a visitor to these regions. A jingling of bells would denote the passing of the blue-tilted Chinese *mapas* drawn by sturdy ponies, or a deeper booming would indicate that a caravan of camels was on its way across the desert, perhaps to far Khotan, or even to Peking. The city gun, really a Chinese cracker, went off with a bang at sunrise to announce that the city gates were open, and it seemed to let loose a perfect pande-

monium of sound. Women shrieked to one another, children cried and quarrelled, dogs barked, horses neighed and cocks crew; the flocks of small birds twittered unceasingly, there was an all-pervading hum of insects, in which one could distinguish the shrill chirp of the tree-cricket, and multitudes of frogs croaked from the watercourses.

At intervals throughout the day would be heard the blowing of an ibex horn, resembling the hoot of a motor. This was a signal from one of the many mills, to inform customers that the miller was ready to grind their grain, or perhaps that the flour was waiting to be carried away. These mills are ramshackle mud buildings on the river or on a water channel, everything being open to the air and no provision made to keep out wind and rain and dust. The wheat is poured into boxes which feed the millstones, and these cast the flour, when ground, on to flat tables, upon one of which I noticed a dirty old cap being used to sweep it up. The Kashgar millers had by no means a good reputation for honesty. A customer's grain is weighed before grinding, yet when it is returned to him as flour it will probably be mixed with some inferior cereal or even with sand, of which there is enough and to spare.

With the noonday heat there always came a welcome lull in the concert of noise, this being the hour of siesta for most living things. But when the sun descended towards the west all the world awoke, and a crescendo of sound would be reached by sunset, all the sounds of the early morning recurring, the legions of cocks seeming to salute the parting day as vociferously as they greeted its appearance. The Kashgaris, by the way, have a very inferior

breed of poultry, and their rendering of our saying: "To count your chickens before they are hatched" is "To count your chickens in the autumn." They speak of a coward as being "chicken-livered," just as we do.

There must be added to the noises I have already enumerated the thudding of drums, the drone of bagpipes, the twanging of *sitars* and the singing of choruses, often most agreeable to western ears. Nor must I omit to mention the *muezzins* calling men to prayer from the minarets of the mosques, their powerful voices ringing out over the city with a solemn beauty as they testify that there is but one God and that Mohamed is His Prophet.

The sunsets of Kashgar were most lovely, with a delicacy and charm all their own. They were not spectacular displays of scarlet, purple and gold as in many parts of the world, but the sky was softly flushed with pale pinks, mauves and yellows, while a wonderful golden haze, due I imagine to the dust particles in the air, shimmered over the whole landscape. The broken loess cliffs, on which stood shabby mud hovels and tombs with no pretensions to architecture, seemed now to be crowned with castles and domes worthy of some city of high romance, the ruined garden-house with its columned verandah standing high above the river was turned into a Greek temple, and the tall poplars silhouetted darkly against the glow resembled cypresses, transporting me in spirit to many an Italian garden in Rome or in the City of Flowers. The chocolate-coloured river flowing below us was now iridescent as the breast of a dove, and across the sands of its wide bed there gleamed the enchanted light that cast a spell over the

whole landscape. And then the sun would set, and in an instant a grey, deathlike pallor would creep over everything, making me shiver and turn away with a curious sense of depression.

During the spring the Kashgaris make pleasure expeditions to the different shrines round the city, going rather to eat and gamble than to say their prayers. Bands of friends are in the habit of feasting one another in turn in some garden, meeting four afternoons a week for the purpose, and sometimes on our evening walks we came across these revellers returning home. The *Begs* and the *Sayyids*, who claim to be descendants of the Prophet, rode showy stallions or well-fed asses and looked imposing figures in their snowy turbans and long silk coats. They were usually handsome men with well-cut noses, fresh complexions and full beards. The young men had moustaches and invariably stuck a rose or a sprig of blossom under the brim of their embroidered caps, and all alike presented a strong contrast to the flat-faced, yellow-skinned Chinese.

The women, who, as in all Moslem countries, have no social intercourse with the men, took their outings by visiting the shrines, one of which they had all to themselves, the *Mazzar* of Bibi Anna. The grave of this female saint was situated on a bluff opposite the Consulate, the mud tomb, on which a white flag fluttered, being enclosed with a mud wall. Here widows and divorced women who desired remarriage and girls anxious for a husband were wont to resort: putting their hands into holes built in the tomb, they would implore the holy woman to aid them.

Try as I would, I was unable to gain any information about the *Bibi Khanum*, as she was called. The

THE SHRINE OF BABI ANNA.

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white flag brought her often to my mind, as I could not stand upon the garden-terrace without seeing it, and now and again at night I observed a lighted lamp hanging above her last resting-place. In a Mohamedan country where woman in theory is little regarded, what had the Lady Anna done that a shrine at which miracles were reputed to be performed should be erected to her memory? When did she live? Was she perhaps kin to *Hazrat* Apak the Priest-King of Kashgar? I can answer none of these questions, and merely know that she was regarded with much veneration.

On one occasion, when many women were assembled at her grave, I asked some of them to put their hands into the holes of the tomb and allow me to photograph them in that position, but realized at once how tactless I had been. With shocked faces the women explained that such a thing would practically amount to sacrilege; but they had no objection to being photographed seated beside the *mazzar*.

Perhaps the most popular shrine is that of Ali Arslan, a couple of miles to the north of the city, the road leading up to it being bordered on either side by gardens, the property of the *mazzar* and a great holiday resort. The lofty brick gateway is barred to horses and vehicles by a tree-trunk, over which we clambered, to find ourselves in a large enclosure with a great tank of water planted round with stately poplars, a usual and pleasing characteristic of holy places in Chinese Turkestan. Behind it lay the shrine, an insignificant building entered by an old carved and fretted doorway, one of the best specimens of this form of native art that we came across in the country. An old *akhun*—his office is

to read the Koran at the graves for the benefit of the departed—was kneeling and reciting prayers before it, and inside the small space was filled by a large tomb covered with blue and white tiles, trophies of flags, and horns of the wild sheep.

Sultan Arslan Boghra, the hero-saint, surnamed the Tiger for his bravery, who is honoured here, fought with great valour against the Buddhist inhabitants of Khotan, who did not wish to change their religion for the tenets of Islam. He was one of the earliest Mohamedan conquerors of Kashgar, and it is recorded by Bellew that the pagan ruler of Khotan, who led his force against the Moslems, offered a large reward to the man who could compass the Sultan's death. At this time the Nestorian Church had its adherents throughout Asia, and the story runs that one of its priests counselled the Buddhists to fall upon their opponents at dawn, as they would then be engaged with their devotions and so would be taken unawares. The advice was followed, and in a great battle on the desert plain of Ordam-Padshah, some fifty miles south-east of Kashgar, the adherents of the Prophet were utterly routed and their gallant leader slain.

Ali Arslan's head was carried in triumph round the walls of Kashgar, into which the Moslems had retreated for the time, and it is supposed to be buried in the shrine that we visited. His body, however, rests at Ordam-Padshah, and Sir Aurel Stein writes that a mound covered with poplars from which flutter rags is all that marks the grave of the saint, although it is a peculiarly holy spot and is annually visited by hundreds of pilgrims.

There are various shrines outside the city that

claim to cure particular diseases. A relative of Ali Arslan is interred in one of these, and before the fretted windows of his *mazzar* is an ancient willow that leans over nearly to the ground. If a patient afflicted with rheumatism will go round the tree seven times in a believing spirit, bending nearly double in order to rub his back against the bark, it is said that he will be freed from his complaint. Old Jafar Bai tried the treatment one day when we were there, but I never ventured to question him as to the result. The so-called Tombs of the Mongols outside the city seemed to me to be somewhat of a fraud, as the mud-domed graves were quite modern. But they are visited annually by thousands of the Faithful, who gamble, feast and have a day's outing in the neglected cemetery, many, I was told, omitting to say their prayers.

To turn to another subject, although Kashgar is the seat of Government, the entrance of the yamen being marked by the masts, some seventy feet high, and the grotesque stone lions that signify authority, yet the Chinese troops are in barracks at Yangi Shahr (New City) some six or seven miles distant. This town is surrounded by high parapeted mud walls in good repair; two sally-ports have to be passed before the big bazar can be entered, and, as is customary, these entrances are crooked in order to foil the evil spirits. Just inside the *Pai-fang*, or roofed gateway, there is a Chinese temple, and over the gate a building in which paper prayers are burnt on fête days and the ashes flung to the heavens.

The stalls in the bazar, with their wooden shutters and matting awnings, seemed much the same as those in the Old City, but in Yangi Shahr the Celestial was

at home instead of looking like an intruder, and soldiers in khaki uniforms and forage caps of German appearance were everywhere to be seen. Black, the royal colour of the Manchus, was still affected by the inhabitants, and most unsuitable wear it was for such a dusty place, but the flag of the Republic, with its five colours, flew over every yamen. It interested me to hear that the yellow stripe stood for China, the black for the Manchus, the red for the Mongols, the blue for Tibet, and the white for the Moslem subjects.

The Chinese seem to hold the province more by bluff than by force, the troops being few, of all ages, and not troubled by overmuch drill. Certainly the Governor and the Commander-in-Chief always go forth in considerable state with detonations of crackers in order to impress the populace, but as, owing to Chinese arrogance, the officials decline to learn any foreign language, they never get into touch with the people they are supposed to govern. Being intensely proud of their old civilization, they utterly decline to move with the times or absorb new ideas, and so are, as it were, petrified.

The upper classes are brought up to despise manual labour and are admirers of the pen, holding the sword in contempt, and as a result are often incapable of defending themselves if attacked. Social distinction goes by learning, a *literatus* being the equal of any one and invariably accorded a seat of honour at the yamen. Probably their unhealthy lives—for they take no exercise, love darkened rooms and are addicted to drink and opium-smoking—have brought them to this ignominious pass; and one Governor said that the long nails he affected were

an excellent aid to self-control, for he could never clench his hand to strike any one in anger! They rule the province easily, because the inhabitants are a mild unwarlike race, accustomed for centuries to be under the heel of a conqueror and preferring the tolerant domination of China to that of Russia.

Liu-Kin-tang, the general who reconquered the province after the death of Yakub Beg, has a big temple erected to his honour outside the New City, and one afternoon we made an expedition to see it. It is just off the broad tree-planted road, always full of traffic, which is spanned by imposing-looking painted bridges that cross the Kizil Su. On our arrival we rode into a large courtyard, where we dismounted to pass through a fantastically decorated gateway into a second courtyard, and were met by the Governor of the City, whose robes of black and blue were crowned by a panama hat. One of his attendants wore a black felt "billy-cock" that looked oddly out of keeping with the rest of his costume, as did the caricatures of English straw hats that were affected by the others. The Governor escorted us to the temple, the façade of which was a blaze of gold, blue and scarlet mingled with Chinese inscriptions. The tomb of the famous general was under a carved canopy, over which gilded dragons careered, and before it was the hero's portrait, an enlarged coloured photograph. An old bronze tripod for burning joss-sticks, and a great bronze bell that the Governor struck in order that we might hear its wonderful tone, stood in front of the photograph, and on one side of the tomb was a fresco of a black and white tiger. Formerly there were large paintings on the walls depicting the general's career, but

unluckily all these had been destroyed by a recent earthquake, and the temple had practically been rebuilt and was shorn of much of its original decoration.

I wondered whether Liu-Kin-tang at all resembled the general of an amusing story told us by Sir Aurel Stein. This Chinaman set out with an army of twelve thousand men to conquer an enemy that inhabited a very hilly country, and he was obliged to negotiate an extremely difficult pass in order to get into touch with the foe. His soldiers clambered to the crest of the ascent and, as he had foreseen, were seized with fear and refused to go farther, but took heart of grace when a body of the recalcitrant tribesmen came forward and tendered their submission. In reality these were devoted followers of the general, who had commanded them to disguise themselves, and on their appearance the army, with its *moral* restored, streamed gaily down the pass into what they imagined to be a conquered country. And so in effect it was; for the tribesmen, terrified at the great host, hastened to surrender, and thus fully justified the astute plan of the general.

The priest in charge of the temple, clad in black and wearing a curious cap, was a weird object, with long greasy hair standing out from his face, and I did my best to reproduce his Cheshire-cat grin with my kodak. When we had seen everything we were invited to partake of tea, and seated ourselves at a small table covered with a cloth badly in need of the wash. Our host put huge chunks of dingy-looking sugar into our glasses with his fingers, and with the same useful members helped us to little sponge cakes and thin biscuits made of toffee and

meal. He himself had the usual little china bowl in which the tea is seethed; a small inverted bowl is placed on the top to prevent the escape of the leaves, and the tea is drunk through the crack between the two.

In common with most upper-class Chinese, the Governor looked ill and had bad teeth, and certainly the fondness of Celestials for turning night into day and carefully avoiding fresh air makes them look very different from the robust Kashgaris, who are at their best on horseback and are essentially an outdoor race. A Celestial is proud of his half-inch-long finger-nails, which show that he has never condescended to manual labour, and if he lives abroad he will send his parents a packet of nail-parings in order to assure them that he is one of the *literati*, who are treated with such consideration throughout the Empire. When forced to travel a Chinaman will not ride, but will go in a *mapa*. This is a painted cart having a blue and black awning and a tasteful dash of scarlet at the back, on which a charm is inscribed, and there are jingling bells on the horses to ward off evil spirits. But the lower classes are very different; strong, hardy and uncomplaining, d seeming to bear out the saying—" A Chinaman is ıl only once in his life, and that is when he is dying."

There were not many Chinese women at Kashgar, and I was told that the conquering race does not look upon any marriage as legal unless it is contracted with a girl of their own country, whom they practically buy. The amount that a would-be husband must pay for a wife is fixed by go-betweens according to her looks and her position in the world. When this is settled, the couple, clad in their best clothes,

enter a room where their friends are assembled, bow low to each other, and then carry round a tray of bowls of tea, which they offer to their guests. This ceremony completes the marriage, and when the bridegroom has lived several days in the house of his parents-in-law he takes his bride to his own home, where she is henceforth under the rule of her mother-in-law.

Although according to English ideas the Chinaman makes but an indifferent husband, he is very proud of his sons. The Celestials carry the Oriental regard for the male sex to extremes. For example, an Englishwoman who had lived in China told me that when she bade her Chinese nurse chastise her little boy if naughty, the woman looked at her in horror, saying in shocked tones, "Him piecee man—I no touch piecee man!" I was told that parents like a boy to be headstrong and uncontrolled, because they think that he is likely to make his way in the world; and they are pleased if he steals cunningly, saying to one another, "Our son is beginning to help the house early." Lying is a fine art among both Chinese and Kashgaris, and there is little shame at being found out.

There is no need for a "Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals" among the Chinese, for they are trained to be considerate to the "brute creation,"—a very pleasant trait in their characters. They certainly live up to their own saying, "Be kind to the horse that carries you, to the cow that feeds you and to the dog that guards your possessions," and they are an example to the Kashgaris, who are callous if not actually cruel in their treatment of animals.

The frequently over-fat horses, mules and dogs belonging to Celestials presented a strong contrast to the usually overworked and underfed Kashgari donkeys, that were beaten by their owners on the slightest provocation. And yet these little creatures, sometimes almost hidden under piles of brushwood or staggering along under loads of sun-dried bricks, or perhaps a plough, the handles of which scraped the ground at every step, keep their independence strangely. They do not obey the voice of their masters, as do the horses; each donkey in a drove picks his own path and does not, like the caravan ponies, follow a leader slavishly. Surely an animal so strong and intelligent deserves a better fate than blows and semi-starvation.

Every one who has travelled in Mohamedan countries knows that the dog is looked upon as an unclean animal, and the starved and mangy pariahs of Kashgar merely filled the position of town-scavengers, though others that were kept to guard the houses were somewhat better treated. These watch-dogs used to rush out and leap at our horses in most unpleasant fashion, until my brother taught them better manners with the lash of his hunting-crop. Fortunately for the cat, the Prophet made a pet of this animal, and it is therefore held in high favour.

At the end of May we had a most interesting visitor in the person of Sir Aurel Stein, on his return from two years in the desert, where he had made fresh discoveries of great importance and extent, his finds filling a hundred and fifty packing-cases. Owing to the wonderful preservative power of sand he had found some specimens of very ancient paper, in connection with which Sir George

Macartney drew my attention to the following passage in Chavannes. The French scholar wrote of two particular documents found by Sir Aurel Stein, "qu'ils paraissent bien remonter au deuxième siècle de notre ère, et sont ainsi les plus vieux spécimens de papier qu'il y ait au monde."

Although Sir Aurel liked the Chinese so well, he said that he was glad to return to Turkestan, where the inhabitants are most hospitable and always ready to place houses and gardens at the disposal of strangers. In fact they are so open-handed that they offer food to any one who comes to the house at any hour; the well-to-do apparently eating at short intervals all day long. But in China, with its old civilization, the custom is very different, the people allowing no one to enter their doors unless he be armed with introductions. Fortunately, the gods are always ready to receive guests, and Sir Aurel has spent many a night in temples full of hideous idols. Such quarters, however, though pleasantly cool in summer, are icy cold in winter.

Another thing that makes travelling in China disagreeable to Europeans is that the inhabitants crowd round any stranger to observe him. They consider that in so doing they are showing attention, and the luckless man renders himself unpopular if he resents it. This behaviour is in strong contrast to that of the Turki, who are most polite, in the English manner, to travellers, and though my brother and I rode and walked through the whole Oasis we never once had a disagreeable look or word; in fact, the only curiosity about us was shown by the women, and that in most unobtrusive fashion.

CHAPTER VI

ON THE WAY TO THE RUSSIAN PAMIRS

This Central Asian scenery has a type of its own, quite different from the Swiss or Caucasian mountain scenes. . . .

Here, though the mountains are higher, the glaciers, owing to the small snowfall, are much more puny, while below there is a picture of utter desolation that would be hard to match in any other part of the world.—St. George Littledale.

At the end of May we found it unpleasantly hot at Kashgar, with a temperature close on 100 degrees; so, early in June, we decided to start off on our tour to the Russian Pamirs, that hitherto jealously guarded district. It was a journey needing a considerable amount of forethought and preparation, because, once away from the Kashgar oasis, we should have to depend on what we had brought with us, save in the case of meat and milk. My brother inspected the tents, saw that a good supply of tent-pegs and horse-shoes was laid in, and arranged for some eighteen ponies to carry the loads, which included large amounts of flour and barley. I had to calculate what quantities of tea, sugar, rice, tinned foods, compressed vegetables, dried fruits, jam, biscuits, candles, et cetera, would be required for seven weeks, had to make stout calico bags in which to put them, and had, moreover, to pack my store-boxes with judgement. For one thing, they must not be too heavy for the baggage

animals, and for another, each box must contain a complete assortment of stores, in order that only one should need to be opened when we halted. The question of supplies haunted me for weeks, so afraid was I of forgetting some indispensable article; but my method of marking the boxes A, B, and so on, and then entering their contents in my note-book, proved my salvation later on, and made me realize that the more trouble one takes beforehand, the more successful a journey is likely to be. The fruit season had just begun with the apricots, and I had baskets of these stoned and laid out to dry in the sun on the roof, while Daoud made jam, salted and potted down butter, and baked bread and cakes to last for the first ten days. As we should camp at heights of ten to fourteen thousand feet, I took my warmest winter clothing, a thick astride habit, leather jacket and fur-lined coat, and ordered an addition to my bedding in the shape of a thick cotton-padded sleeping sack. To complete my equipment, Sir Aurel Stein insisted on giving me a pair of double-lined native boots, a gift that proved invaluable in camp at night, and my pith helmet and blue gauze veils were equally necessary to ward off sunstroke and to keep my face from being skinned when we rode during the heat of the day.

To be perfectly frank, I was by no means easy about this expedition, to which my brother looked forward with the eagerness of the sportsman. I have never had a good head for heights or for walking along the edge of precipices, and from the various books of travel that I had read it seemed that one ought to be possessed of unusual nerve and agility to negotiate the passes by which the Roof of the World

must be reached. But I try to make it a rule to see only one lion in my path at a time and not to waste strength and courage in picturing what may after all turn out to be imaginary dangers, and naturally my blood was stirred at the thought that I was about to start upon an adventure vouchsafed to very few women. The Pamirs had always been a name to conjure with, and evoked visions of high uplands, galloping Kirghiz, wild sheep with great curled horns and an almost complete isolation from the world, and made me ashamed of my twinges of faint-heartedness, which, indeed, vanished for good and all when once we were on the road.

At last the day of our start arrived. The Russians, who interested themselves considerably in what they thought was a mad enterprise, were shocked that we had fixed on a Monday to begin our journey, and prophesied disaster. I made enquiries as to why this day should be regarded as a *jour néfaste*, and was told that, as it was the custom, among the lower classes at all events, to have a drinking-bout on Sunday, there were usually accidents in plenty on the first day of the working week. As our servants were all Mohamedans, bound by the tenets of their religion to touch no alcohol, we were not in danger from this cause, and the prognostications of our friends did not depress us in the slightest.

Besides ourselves and the servants, the party included *Khan Sahib* Iftikhar Ahmad the Head of the office, who was an Indian gentleman possessed of much varied information, and the sport-loving Indian Doctor.

Sir Aurel Stein, Mr. Bohlin and a group of *Aksakals*, or British Agents, whom my brother had

just been entertaining on the occasion of the King's birthday, rode out with us for two or three miles, their fine stallions squealing and trying to attack one another at intervals. When these men, who were clad in brilliantly coloured silk coats and snowy turbans, left us, we stopped on the bank of the Kizil Su to have a last cup of tea with our guest, who was staying behind in the Consulate in order to re-pack his priceless treasures and dispatch them to India. With the fording of the river I felt that we were really off, and all my housekeeping anxieties dropped from me like a garment; for, whatever might be my faults of omission or commission, it was useless to trouble about them, as I could now do nothing to repair them.

Our way led due south, and there was cultivation during the whole march, the barley turning yellow, the wheat in ear, and ploughing going on busily for the autumn crop of Indian corn. I rode astride on a native saddle. "Tommy," as I called the sturdy white pony which was to be my second mount, had an unpleasant trick of stumbling that detracted from his merits as a steed; yet, to do him justice, he came down only once, and that was on the last march of the journey, and on a sandy road without a pebble.

A couple of days of riding and camping brought us to the oasis of Tashmalik, where we were separated from the cultivated area of Kashgar by a strip of stony desert varied by sand-dunes. In spite of the planting of tamarisks and reeds the sand was encroaching on the oasis, and a house and garden had been lately overwhelmed by this insidious foe, which the prevailing winds piled up in lofty mounds. Seeing

this we could better understand Sir Aurel Stei explorations of cities that had been buried for centuries in the sand, which had also choked up the rivers by which their inhabitants had supported life.

The *Beg* of Tashmalik offered us tea, roast fowl, bread and hard-boiled eggs. The eggs had been coloured red, because white is the emblem of mourning in China, and the inhabitants of Turkestan copied this as well as many other customs from the dominant race. Our old host partook of tea with us, and I noticed that, when his bowl required refilling, his servant obligingly drank up what was left and then poured in fresh liquid and handed it to him.

That night we camped on an open space surrounded by trees and irrigation channels, and as it was hot we slept *à la belle étoile* outside our tents. It was delicious to feel the cool night breeze as I dropped off to sleep, but not so pleasant to wake suddenly in the dark with the horrible sensation that something large was creeping over my face. By the dim starlight I saw crawling forms on my bed, and my torchlight revealed the largest beetles that I have ever seen—and I have a considerable experience of the cockroach—some reposing on my pillow and others flying round with a booming noise. How I regretted my mosquito net! But luckily I had a head-net in my hold-all, and after shaking off the unwelcome intruders I composed myself to sleep again as best I could, knowing that I had none too long a night, as I must rise at four o'clock.

On the third day we rode towards low conglomerate hills with a background of snowy peaks, and were soon painfully stumbling among the smooth boulders of the wide bed of the Gez River, which was

the crux of the first part of our journey. In this district no one comments upon the weather—it is almost monotonously fine during the summer—but travellers ask one another how high or rather how low the water is. In our case the answer was important because, if we had arrived too late, the dangerous Gez River could not have been crossed and we should have had to make our way over a series of steep passes in the hills.

Fortune favoured us; for the "great water," which is due about the middle of June and continues throughout July, had not yet commenced. But two or three days later the fast melting snows would have swollen the stream and rendered any crossing impossible: as it was, it was touch and go once or twice. The next three days were spent in the long Gez defile, the frowning mountains rising up in many places sheer from the river-bed and hemming the water within narrower and narrower limits as we proceeded. I was reminded now and again of the gloomy canyons of the Fraser River in British Columbia, and all the time the roar of the water crashing over rocks and boulders rang in our ears. During each stage we had to ford the river some five or six times, and at first I had the queer sensation of being carried down-stream, the land opposite appearing to swim away from me. But, having traversed rivers in Persia, I knew the danger of becoming giddy and falling helplessly into the torrent; therefore I kept my eyes on some fixed object and not on the swirling water, and as I was well looked after and had no responsibility, I enjoyed the excitement of the crossings. Old Jafar Bai took one of my reins and my brother's huntsman, Nadir, rode at my side

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FORDING THE GEZ RIVER.

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to rescue me in case my horse fell, leaving me nothing to do but to sit in my saddle and urge my steed with voice and whip. The animal, unaccustomed to deep water, would plunge and stumble as it tried to make good its footing on the slippery boulders, and now and again would become nervous, lose its head and attempt to swim. All around us were struggling horses, whose excited riders without ceasing yelled at the top of their voices as they drove the baggage animals before them, and shouted countless directions that could not be heard above the tumult and hurly-burly of the water as it poured over its stony bed. I was advised to keep my horse up-stream at first, and when half-way across to let it go down-stream, and was told that I must on no account cling to it if it lost its footing and fell, for it would probably trample upon me in its struggles. Apparently the best thing in case of an accident was to let myself go with the current and trust to being rescued. The natives are said to cross rapid rivers in safety, even when the water reaches to their armpits, by jumping all the time—a very exhausting method, I should imagine.

Though our baggage ponies were lightly laden they seemed at times almost overwhelmed, but the *Beg* of Tashmalik and his men who escorted us, knew the dreaded Gez River in all its moods, and shepherded the terrified animals most cleverly. At the deepest fords camels were called into requisition and with much querulous complaining were forced into the stream with our loads, and on these occasions the *Beg* insisted that I should mount his own horse, saying that it was an expert at negotiating torrents. The lord of this district was a big, ruddy-

faced man, and could hardly take his eyes off the first Englishwoman he had ever seen, being particularly interested in my side-saddle, which he thought was a most insecure perch. He looked upon me as being more or less in his charge, and I heard afterwards that he had deputed three of his men who were strong swimmers to keep an eye upon me in case my horse foundered. As a rule the early morning is the best time to cross these rivers, because no snow melts in the mountains during the night, when everything is frozen, nor does it do so until the sun has been up for some hours. Once or twice our baggage animals were greatly delayed by the water, and on one occasion only our bedding reached the camping ground, a pasturage dotted with tamarisk scrub. That night I was roused more than once by some grazing pony lurching against my bed in the darkness.

The dreary Gez gorge became wilder as we penetrated its recesses. Here and there rocks and stones were piled one upon another in a chaotic confusion that gave one a glimpse of the tremendous power of ice and water, the scenery being so savage as to seem more like a nightmare than reality. It inspired me with a kind of awe, and I am not ashamed to own that I should have been terrified to find myself alone in these solitudes, shut in by the lofty conglomerate hills, above which one gained occasional glimpses of snowy peaks. The river, beneficent and life-giving in its lower reaches, is here an agent of destruction, with not a tree and hardly a plant on its banks; and yet at one of the gloomiest reaches, when I was filled with a sense of impending disaster, my mood was changed in a second by the sight of two small birds pursuing one another in a love flight.

We had to cross several native bridges made on the cantilever system, and always dismounted, for they swayed from side to side, and our horses were nervous at first, even when led over them. As the raging torrent at these points was penned into narrow limits it swirled and eddied and foamed among the huge boulders below us, and I was thankful that these bridges had been improved since Lord Dunmore visited the Pamirs in 1892 and wrote that they consisted of a couple of beams on which brushwood and large round stones were laid.

When there were no bridges and the water was too deep for our horses we were obliged to negotiate various passes. In these the narrow track, with only room for one animal abreast, was often formed of loose shale, which here and there poured down the mountain side in big fans, the shingle rustling as it fell on to our path and descended the precipitous cliffs to the torrent surging far below. I did not appreciate my pony's fondness for treading on the extreme edge of the track and sending showers of tiny pebbles hurtling down; but as it would have been a physical impossibility for me to have walked up all these passes—I always descended them on foot—I used to console myself with the reflection that our horses were by no means anxious to commit suicide.

At the end of the gorge, dome-shaped Muztagh Ata, with its covering of snow, stood up magnificently, seeming to block up the end of the narrow valley, and from that moment it entered into my life, so familiar did it become to me and so greatly did I admire it. Sandy tracks now led us to the shallow Bulunkul Lake, more than half-filled with sand blown

from the hills that encircle it, and we halted on a stretch of pasturage on which yaks were grazing, and were glad to think that a critical part of our journey was safely accomplished.

It may be of interest if I give some account of how we travelled during this tour. The rule was to rise at 5 A.M., if not earlier, and I would hastily dress and then emerge from my tent to lay my pith-hat, putties, gloves and stick beside the breakfast table spread in the open. Diving back into my tent I would put the last touches to the packing of hold-all and dressing-case, Jafar Bai and his colleague Humayun being busy meanwhile in tying up my bedstead and bedding in felts. While the tents were being struck we ate our breakfast in the sharp morning air, adjusted our putties, applied face-cream to keep our skins from cracking in the intense dryness of the atmosphere, and then would watch our ponies, yaks or camels as the case might be, being loaded up. These last-mentioned ungainly creatures used to cry and protest all the time, giving their owners as much trouble as possible before they could be induced to lie down, and occasionally throwing off their burdens. A baby-camel being of the party during part of our journey, its mother greatly resented being made to work, and all the animals were shedding their winter coats, the fur hanging on their bodies in loose, untidy patches. My chief objection to the camel is its disagreeable odour, and I have often wondered why an animal that is such a clean feeder should smell so horribly.

When the loads were at last adjusted and the caravan was ready to start, we would mount our horses, or one of our men would lead them behind us

while we walked for an hour before we began to ride. As we had three horses between us, I usually rode half the stage on my side-saddle if the going were good, and the other half on Tommy with a native saddle which had a cushion strapped on to it, and I found that the change of seat kept me from getting over-tired, while my astride habit did for either mode.

We usually marched for five hours and then halted for lunch, waiting until our caravan had overtaken and passed us. Sattur, who accompanied us on his pony, would unpack his tiffin basket, and we would lie by the water, in the shade of a tree if possible, as the sun by noon was very powerful. When the worst of the heat was over, and our baggage animals had been given an hour's start, we would ride another three or four hours into camp, to revel in afternoon tea and warm baths, I having an extra treat in the brushing out of my hair, so hastily done up in the morning. Then would come a consultation with Daoud as to our evening meal, and one of the store boxes would be opened to give out everything needed for it and for the morrow's breakfast and lunch. After dinner we usually strolled up and down for an hour, warmly wrapped up—for it became very cold when the sun went down—and then turned in to dreamless slumbers.

From Lake Bulunkul and onwards we saw a great deal of the Kirghiz, and, though travellers differ as to their opinion of these peaceful pastoral people, we ourselves liked them and found them most friendly and hospitable. Their broad hairless faces and high cheek-bones show their Mongol descent, but though akin to the yellow-skinned, oblique-eyed Chinese, they look very different, and both men and women have fresh ruddy complexions.

We first camped with them at a spot called "Stone Sheep-folds," from the presence of a roughly walled enclosure into which the flocks were driven at night to be guarded from the wolves by the savage Kirghiz dogs. As we rode across a wide grassy plain towards a group of *akhois*, the native dwellings that look like huge bee-hives, it was the hour of the afternoon milking, and Kirghiz women in gaily coloured coats, long leather boots and the characteristic lofty white headgear, were busily at work. They had tied the sheep and the goats and the black, brown or parti-coloured yaks to long ropes and let the animals go free one by one when they had been milked, a loud chorus of bleating and grunting going on all the time. Troops of mares, accompanied by their foals, were feeding all round the camp, and our Badakshani horses were excited to such an extent that the chestnut had to be blindfolded in order to quiet him; and throughout the tour I had often from this cause an unpleasantly lively time with my grey, which had been imperturbable when at Kashgar.

It was mid-June, but a high wind was blowing and drove the sand in clouds from the hills, invading the little tent, in which I could not stand upright save in the centre, and whisking up its flaps. As I could not perform my toilet unless I fastened up the entrance, I had to grope for everything in almost total darkness, and though the space was extremely limited, it was surprising how easily things got mislaid. My tent was still less desirable as a residence when it rained, as after a while tiny streams would begin to trickle down inside at the points where my camp furniture touched the walls, and my belongings—most of them perforce on the ground—got damp and

clammy. Of course a large tent with talc windows is very comfortable—with certain exceptions; but we had heard so much about the storms that sweep over the Pamirs that we had taken only small ones on this expedition.

At our next halt, Kuntigmas, meaning "the place that the sun cannot reach," I was provided with an *akhoi* all to myself. Indeed, I always dwelt in these roomy "white houses" whenever possible. They are usually eighteen feet in diameter, the same size as the Turkoman *kibitkas* in the north of Persia, and the framework of willow-wood is a trellis about four feet high, which pulls out and is placed on the ground in a circle. To the upper edge of this a series of curved laths are tied about a foot apart, the other end of these laths being inserted into the holes of a thick wooden hoop that forms the top of the dome-like erection. Large felts are now fastened with ropes over the *akhoi*, leaving free the opening at the top to admit light and air—also rain and snow on occasion—and to let out the smoke of the fires. In case of really bad weather a felt can be drawn over the circular opening, and again withdrawn, on the same principle as the ventilation arrangements in some of the London theatres. A wooden framework, often prettily carved, is placed between the two ends of the trellis-work to serve as a doorway, and is hung with a piece of matting and a felt or carpet. Inside, the framework is completely covered with felts, and along the top of the trellis I noticed throughout our tour an effective finish in the shape of a band of red felt with a blue floriated pattern that passed half-way round the *akhoi*, the other half being decorated with the same design, but with the colours reversed.

These dwellings can be purchased for £7 (a Chinese *yambu*), but those of superior quality often go up to £35 in price. The earthen floor is beaten hard and covered with carpets, a depression being left in the centre for the fire. Some of the old carpets were very pleasing, with their soft madders and indigoes and greens, a favourite design being conventionalized flowers; but alas, most of them were badly burnt by the sparks that had leapt on to them from the brushwood used to start the fires. The Kirghiz of to-day does not appreciate their velvety sheen, but loves the modern Khotan productions, with their crude scarlets, purples, yellows and magentas all introduced into the same pattern in a series of violent colour discords.

All travellers speak of the *akhoi* with esteem, and I was always grateful for its space, and, in fine weather, for its comfort, although during snow and rain I found that it had some drawbacks. For example, the hole at the top let in much wet, but if the felt were drawn across it I was deprived of light, and if I rolled up my entrance carpet I had no privacy and was exposed to violent draughts, as the walls were by no means air-proof. The felts that covered them were so full of holes that on a rainy day one had to use much discrimination as to where to put one's belongings in order to keep them comparatively dry, and on more than one occasion I have slept with my mackintosh drawn up over my head in order to prevent the rain from splashing on my face during the night.

There is little in the way of "furniture" in these dwellings save picturesquely shaped copper jugs in which water is boiled, a few copper pots and basins used for cooking and as receptacles for milk, and

some rough wooden buckets. On one occasion we were ushered into an *akhoi* to eat our lunch out of the glare of the sun, and had ensconced ourselves on a rug, at one end of which was a bundle of cotton-padded quilts. Jafar Bai warned us that a small boy was sleeping under them, and it was just as well that he did so, as we might easily have sat upon him. The child moaned and coughed, and then, hearing strange voices, began to cry with terror and made violent efforts to get free of his coverings, under which he could hardly have breathed. We sent for his mother, but she was too shy to make her appearance, so her eldest son, attired in a long green coat, ventured in and carried off his frightened little brother.

We were now and onwards camping at a height of eleven to fourteen thousand feet, and when there was no sunshine it was disagreeably cold and raw, despite the season of the year. We were held up for a couple of days by snow soon after we left Kuntigmas, and as a Kirghiz woman had washed our underclothing just before the weather broke, I had a fire lit in my *akhoi* both to keep myself warm and to dry the wet garments. Nadir was an expert in lighting these fires, and brought in an armful of wild lavender and a basket of cakes of *argon*, the dried dung of the yak, the only fuel obtainable in this part of the world, where trees are conspicuous by their absence. He squatted on the ground, set light to the brushwood, and piled the fuel in a bank round it, manipulating it with a pair of tongs and coaxing the fire to burn with the aid of an ingenious pair of bellows made from a whole goatskin. At first the result was a cloud of acrid smoke that made my eyes smart and shed floods of involuntary tears; the only way to

avoid this ordeal being to sit on the ground *à la nomade.* After a while the smoke ceased and left a clear red fire that gave out considerable heat, but turned to ashes so soon that I wondered whether it was worth all the trouble it took to make. Certainly it was of practically no use in drying our extensive wash, which had to be carried along in its wet condition until the sun appeared again.

Whenever we stopped at these Kirghiz encampments, the principal women would come to visit me, bringing usually an offering of a kind of puff pastry the size of a plate, made with cream, very crisp and rich, layer above layer, and about three inches thick: my gifts in return were gaily coloured handkerchiefs and strings of coral beads, both of which gave great satisfaction. As my guests entered the *akhoi* they would kick off the low shoes that men and women alike wear over their long leather boots, and would seat themselves on the floor, looking picturesque in their flowered chintz coats padded with cotton and their curious turban-like headgear that is formed by winding muslin on a wooden frame and is laid aside in the privacy of their own homes. All wore roughly made, but effective-looking, necklaces of coral and silver with long pendants, and had silver clasps and buttons on their coats. Some of them had beautifully embroidered caps bordered with silver buttons and ending in bossed chains which hung over their ears, this headgear being worn under the turbans.

The elder women were hard-featured and weather-beaten, a natural consequence of their exposure to all sorts of climatic conditions, but some of the young girls were rosy-cheeked and attractive-looking, despite their flat faces and rather snub noses. Old Jafar Bai

KIRGHIZ WOMEN IN GALA DRESS.

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and Nadir were very useful in helping to entertain my guests, translating my Persian remarks into Turki, and the ladies enjoyed drinking tea sweetened with many lumps of sugar instead of the customary salt, and eating European biscuits and sweetmeats. Before leaving they would gather up any sugar and eatables that were left, packing them away in the cloth wound round their waists or in a breast-pocket of their thick outer coats. They struck me as being very pleasant and easy-tempered with one another, and when they took their leave with profuse salaams they would thank me most politely for the entertainment.

I believe that the Kirghiz women have a better position than their Mohamedan sisters in other parts of the world; yet their lives are strenuous and filled with unceasing work. As women are in a decided minority in the Pamirs they are valuable, and a man possessed of several daughters counts himself rich indeed. A suitor for the hand of one of them induces three of the chief men of the tribe to bargain with the fortunate father, and I was told that a hundred sheep or five Chinese *yambus* (£35) is a moderate price to pay for a bride. At one of our camps, for example, the headman was pointed out to me as having produced money and stock to the value of £500 for his unprepossessing-looking wife. On the other hand, the girl brings with her a dowry of camels, horses, yaks, clothes and jewellery that is supposed to equal in value what her father has received from the bridegroom.

A wedding entails but slight expense as compared with a funeral, the father merely giving a big feast to the whole tribe, and this does not seriously embarrass him as it is customary for the guests to present gifts in kind to the bridegroom, who is

expected to hand them over to his future father-in-law.

Miss Czaplicka writes that as a rule a man pays for his bride by instalments and does not visit the residence of her parents until the first lot of live-stock has been delivered to her father. On this occasion the future husband is not allowed to see his *inamorata*, and neither bridegroom nor bride makes an appearance at the wedding-feast. Late at night the *jinai*, or female matchmakers, conduct the young couple separately to the *akhoi* of the bride's parents, the girl making a feint of resisting and the *jinai* pretending to hinder the husband by barking like dogs. The bridegroom goes off early the next morning and avoids his parents-in-law for the whole day, and when he has paid the full price for his wife he carries her off with a show of force, which she plays up to by pretending to resist the attempt to take her to a new home.

It happens sometimes that a man does not possess enough live-stock to purchase a wife, in which case he will enter into an agreement with his would-be father-in-law to serve him and look after his flocks for a term of years, just as did Jacob many centuries ago in order to gain the hand of Rachel. He is allowed to marry the girl of his choice and lives with her family during his service, at the end of which her father will give him an *akhoi*, yaks, mares, sheep and goats, and the couple will go off and live independently of the old people. My brother's best Kirghiz *shikari*, Shamshir by name, confided to him that he was most anxious to marry, but so far he had only gathered together thirty sheep towards the realization of his heart's desire. However, his hard case so touched

his employer's heart that, when we left the district, Shamshir received a parting gift that would appreciably hasten the wedding-day.

There is practically no divorce among the Kirghiz, marriage being looked upon as permanent. A wife is considered to belong to her husband's family and lives with them if she becomes a widow, and in the event of her remarriage she is obliged to forgo the dowry that she brought to her first husband. Mohamedans are permitted to have four wives, but, owing to the scarcity of women, few Kirghiz can avail themselves of this privilege, though a man occasionally takes a second wife at the urgent request of his first one.

Certainly a good wife must be "above rubies" to a Kirghiz. She looks after the flocks and herds more or less, does all the milking, makes cream, curds, cheese and *koumiss*, cooks the food, fashions clothes for herself and her family, and of course has to rear her children. Besides all this, she is skilled in weaving felts with which to cover the *akhois*, and the effective embroideries that adorn them are the work of her hands, as are also the coarse but pleasing carpets. I have seen her staggering along under the big bundle of laths that form the framework of the "white house," and she lends a hand to its erection and ties on its felt coverings. Her lord and master has often filled me with indignation by standing idly by and looking on at his wife's labours.

Though the women are almost as good riders as the men, they ride only for the practical purposes of travelling from camp to camp or herding the mares and cattle. Recreation, as we understand it, does not come much into their lives, and when guests have to

be entertained, or feasts are given, they have to work harder than usual at the cooking. In fact I was not surprised to hear that when he recounts his possessions a Kirghiz will mention his camels, yaks, horses, sheep and goats first, relegating wife and children to the end of the list.

The man's part in life struck me as being by far the easier one. He rides about on his wiry ponies, attends all the wedding and funeral feasts in the district, loves to play the "goat game," and will drive his yaks and sheep into Kashgar to sell, if he is in need of flour, clothing or boots. He is too wise to wed the pretty Kashgari girls, who would be utterly useless and out of their element in an *akhoi*, nor do the active, weather-beaten maidens of his tribe hanker after the life of the city.

In the different encampments that we visited children were often conspicuous by their absence, and I was told that most of those born during the long winter succumb to the rigours of the climate, a large proportion of infants being stillborn from the same cause. Smallpox also carries off many, and although the health of the Kirghiz is, as a rule, excellent, they die very easily if they fall ill, there being no doctor on the Pamirs, or any knowledge of the rudiments of nursing. It seems a case of the survival of the fittest; for I have never come across sturdier, hardier-looking men and women than those I encountered during our tour. They live almost entirely on milk, curds and cheese, killing their flocks for food only when milk is scarce or guests arrive, or for wedding and funeral feasts. Their favourite drink is *koumiss*, the fermented milk of mares. One sip of this was enough for me, as I found it so acid and smoky that

I had no desire to repeat the experiment. Bread, sugar and tea are luxuries, and, as they grow nothing save a little barley in places, they never taste either fruit or vegetables; but they certainly thrive on their milk diet. The best milk comes from the yaks. These sturdy animals looked very dishevelled at this season, as their shaggy hair was coming off in patches. They are far hardier than cows, and, though their yield is less, the milk is much richer and is yielded over a longer period.

Neither my brother nor I derived much benefit from the limitless quantities of milk and cream that we saw at the encampments. The Kirghiz boil the milk in open vessels, with the result that it always tasted so strongly of the pungent smoke that we found junkets and milk puddings quite uneatable. Moreover, they are in the habit of manipulating the cream with their hands, both these and the bowls being very far from clean. Only twice were we offered cream that was smokeless and white, and this we found delicious.

The yaks—black, brown, grey or black and white—are of two species, those carrying big branching horns and those without any. They are strong and remarkably sure-footed, though slow, and we used them often for pack work. The curious single grunt which they emit at frequent intervals earns them their scientific name of *Bos grunniens*. It was frequently my fate when camping to have a yak ensconced somewhere outside my *akhoi*, separated from me only by a felt, so that it seemed as if it were literally grunting into my ear during the night. They appeared to be very docile to their owners, but sometimes took a violent dislike to Europeans, as my brother once

experienced to his cost in Ladak, when he was chased by a black bull and escaped with considerable difficulty. The Kirghiz are on the most familiar terms with their animals. I often found a crowd of lambs and kids behind a screen in an *akhoi*, or struggling to emerge from some hole underground, and if I rolled up my hanging door I was frequently visited by the most engaging kids, only too ready to make friends with the intruder. I was told that the Kirghiz keep cocks in order that the birds may rouse their owners at daybreak, but we ourselves came across no poultry during our travels among these nomads.

Washing is not a Kirghiz characteristic, and, indeed, in a country where the rivers are partly ice-bound in July one could hardly expect the inhabitants to be fond of bathing. They must find the long winter with its bitter winds very trying, even in their warmest grazing-grounds. The flocks scrape away the snow with their hoofs in order to find the grass underneath, but are in extremely poor condition before the approach of spring, and have to be carefully guarded from the depredations of snow-leopards, wild dogs and wolves. These last come round in packs and lie in wait, watching their opportunity; on one occasion Nadir lost eighty of his sheep in the full daylight of a winter morning. His brother, who was in charge of the flock, went to his *akhoi* for a short time, leaving a small boy and his savage dogs in charge. As soon as he was out of sight the wolves set upon the sheep, killing them one after the other in a kind of orgy of bloodshed, and paying no heed whatever to the dogs, which were powerless to prevent the slaughter. Many of the sheep fled into the hills

LOADING UP THE YAKS.

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in their terror, and Nadir recovered very few of them.

Iftikhar Ahmad related to me how once a large and exceptionally savage dog that he possessed was killed by a couple of wolves. They stalked the dog, one getting in front of it and one behind, and, while it stood undecided which foe to attack first, one of the wolves rushed at it with tremendous force and threw it down. In less time than it takes to relate, the victim was torn asunder, and the conquerors made off, each carrying half of the spoils of victory.

The tribesmen keep their *akhois* warm in winter by banking snow round them, closing up all interstices and crowding together; for fires cannot be used indiscriminately, the supply of *argon* being by no means unlimited.

Though the Kirghiz nominally follow the religion of the Prophet and are Sunnis, they pay little heed to its observances beyond keeping the fast of Ramazan; but this is not to be wondered at, since they have few *mullas* to show them the right path. When they die they are buried in a little cemetery belonging to the tribe, and usually situated on the side of a hill. Low mud domes, looking much like *akhois* in the distance, are placed over the remains of men of importance; and when these latter die, their relatives invite the tribe to great feasts and also organize horse-races, in which the winners are awarded handsome prizes. The idea is that the dead men are giving these lavish entertainments in order to disperse the wealth which they need no longer, the Kirghiz not being concerned to "lay up riches for those that shall come after."

Here and there we came across the tomb of a

sayyid, the mud dome enclosed by a rough stone wall, on which were set poles hung with fluttering rags. One such dome was erected over a mighty hunter, and the *shikaris* had hung it round with horns of the wild sheep and were in the habit of depositing pinches of gunpowder on the grave, in order that the departed Nimrod might give them success in the chase. These primitive monuments are the only buildings that we came across during our tour.

The headman of a tribe or district is called a *Beg*, and in Chinese Turkestan, in the uplands of which we travelled at first, he is put in authority by the *Amban*, to whom he gives a gift for the honour, recouping himself afterwards by taking a fortieth part of the flocks and herds of the families in his charge. These officials were most helpful to us, arranging for transport—usually the great stumbling-block of travellers in Central Asia—sending men on ahead to prepare *akhois* for us, accompanying my brother and treating us as honoured guests when we passed through their districts. One of these hosts was an officer in Chinese employ, and said that he had a force of thirty-two men under his orders. The truth was that the *Amban* drew pay for thirty-two soldiers and gave our friend the money for *eight*. He in his turn economized by paying *three* soldiers, his wife and children figuring as the remaining *five*.

A *choga* or "robe of honour" was usually presented to the *Beg* when we left his district, and the man would kneel to receive the brilliantly coloured coat, and make the gesture of passing his hands across his face, which was meant to signify his humility in the presence of my brother. Then, calling out, "*Allah Ho Akbar*," he would spring to his feet and

rush off in high glee to show his "decoration"—for so he regarded it—to the men of his tribe.

During the first days of our arrival on these uplands we had disagreeable weather, although it was mid-June. Sometimes there was driving rain and snow of exceptionally melting quality, and when it was dry the high winds blew up the sand in great clouds. Once or twice, after starting off on a fine morning, we were forced at the end of the march to make a hurried rush to the encampment at which we were to halt, in order to avoid an imminent dust-storm, the excited horses racing across ground so boggy that on ordinary occasions we should have negotiated it with care. At intervals we could hear what I imagined to be peals of thunder, but was in reality the roar of avalanches as they slid down the sides of the snow-clad mountains that were almost hidden by the dust haze. We were delayed in one place for a couple of days, as the local *Beg* said that the heavy rain had made the going too bad for our baggage-camels, and a very damp and chilly wait it was. If we ventured outside our *akhois* we were drenched to the skin, with no means of drying ourselves save by the inadequate fires that I have described. I was delighted when the sun reappeared, and, as we started off, the *Beg's* wife came to bid me a most kindly farewell and to wish me good luck on the road; and throughout the journey the chief woman of every camp always took a particular interest in my welfare.

We left the grazing ground beside the river and ascended a broad, barren valley leading into a range of low bare hills which we crossed by easy passes, and for a couple of days travelled through a stony desolation

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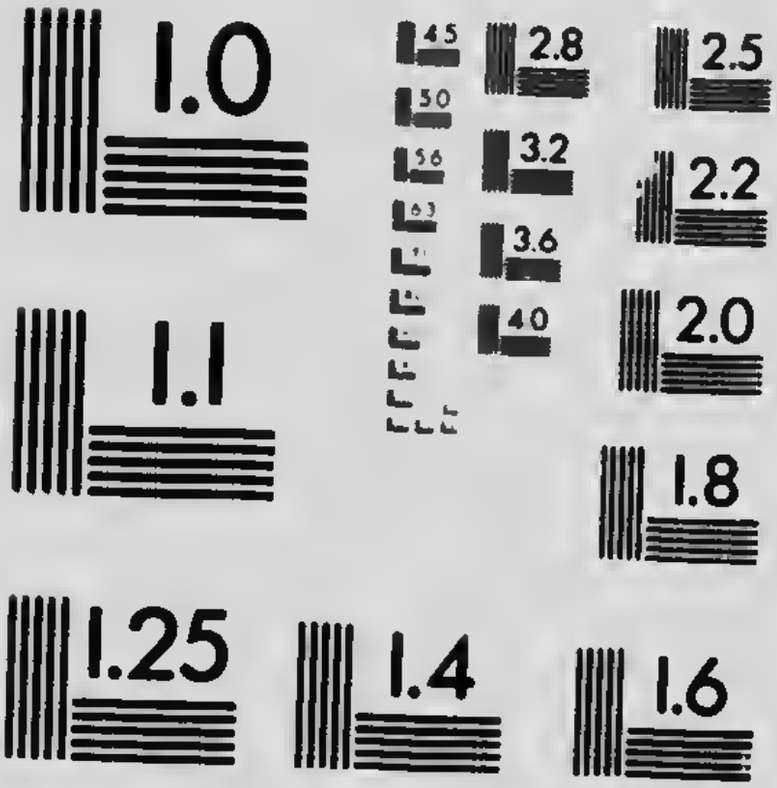

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among brown hills crested with snow. There was barely a sign of life to be seen save once, when a butterfly fluttered feebly among the boulders and *débris* through which the track lay, and I wondered how the poor insect could survive, as we were some miles from vegetation of any kind. There were often little flowers in abundance on the grassy banks of the streams, and I noted two or three varieties of primulas, some tiny and of palest mauve, while others, big and lusty, were of a dark tint. The buttercups and a small cistus spread themselves in golden patches, crimson lousewort flushed the ground, and I was sorry to have no acquaintance with scores of low-growing plants that were bursting into minute cream, yellow or purple blossoms. The whole flora was Alpine, and reminded me of the beautiful display that I had often enjoyed in Switzerland; but here the gentians were either white or a pale blue.

At times we enjoyed superb views of the great snow-clad peaks towards which we were travelling, and these visions of remote and unearthly beauty compensated for the weary miles of stumbling over rounded boulders and pebbles. We were only able to go at a foot's pace. The horses disliked the journey more than we did, because they got foot-sore; and Jafar Bai had to keep a vigilant eye upon their shoes, as the nails had a habit of dropping out.

On June 18 we camped, at a height of 13,000 feet, below the Katta Dawan, or Great Pass, by crossing which we should leave Chinese Turkestan and reach the Russian Pamirs, the goal of our journey.

CHAPTER VII

THE ROOF OF THE WORLD

I scaled precipitous mountain crags clad with snow: found my way through the scarped passes of the Iron Gates;—I have traversed the valley of Pamir.—*Life of Hiuen Tsiang*, BEAL.

The Pamirs are both fertile and barren, both habitable and desolate, both smiling and repellent according to the point of view from which they are regarded. They are among the deliberate paradoxes of nature.—*The Pamirs and the Source of the Oxus*, Hon. GEORGE N. CURZON.

IT was a thrilling thought that I was about to tread in the footsteps of some of the intrepid travellers in High Asia, such as the Buddhist monk, Hiuen Tsiang, Marco Polo, Wood, the first Englishman to enter the Pamirs, and many another whom the Red Gods called to feats of daring and endurance. But my lot was an extremely easy one compared with theirs; for, being the only woman of the party, I was guarded and protected in every possible way. Perhaps some of my readers may be a little vague as to the exact meaning of the word Pamirs. They are described by Sir Thomas Holdich, the eminent geographer, as "valleys reaching up in long slopes to the foot of mountain peaks," and they are known by the Persian term of *Bam-i-Dunia* or Roof of the World.

On that June morning we were up at 5 A.M. and, although snow had fallen during the night, the day

was fine and gave good hopes of a successful crossing of the pass. It was bitterly cold, but my leather coat was impervious to wind, a Shetland shawl swathed my pith-hat and neck, and I had besmeared both face and feet plentifully with vaseline and therefore felt prepared to meet whatever might befall.

When we had seen our baggage yaks loaded we walked up the narrow valley, down which ran a little stream with scanty grazing on its banks; but before long the stiff pull up the mountain side began, and we were obliged to mount. Our Kirghiz guide halted every few yards to let the panting horses take breath —in fact, the rarefied air on these heights seemed to try them almost as much as it would have exhausted us had we been forced to walk. We soon reached the snow-line, and our animals plunged and stumbled through freshly fallen snow on the narrow track where we moved along in single file. It seemed a long time, but in reality we reached the crest of the Katta Dawan in a couple of hours and found ourselves on a little plateau some 16,000 feet high. Clouds had been gathering during our climb and fine snow now began to fall fast, making us fear that we might be caught in a storm and possibly miss the track, which it needed the practised eye of the Kirghiz to discover. Fortunately the wind came to our rescue, sweeping the air clear at intervals, and I saw that we were in the midst of great white giants shouldering one another, a glacier lying to our left, shining in the fitful gleams of the sun. Ahead of us low green hills scantily flecked with snow opened out to give a glimpse of the intense blue of the Great Karakul Lake, a soft mist half revealing the landscape, and the whole making a picture of exquisite beauty that

somewhat reminded us of the Highlands of Scotland. But it was no time to linger and enjoy the view, and we began the descent, soon dismounting as our horses floundered badly in the snow and I had no wish to be shot over Tommy's head. Then followed an hour of struggling downwards during which I was sometimes up to the knee in the snow, and once or twice fell headlong, my thick clothing impeding me a good deal but saving me from hurt in my tumbles. Somehow we scrambled down at last into a long defile, and the falling snow turned into a chilly sleet that cut our faces. But nothing of that sort mattered, and as we drank hot tea from our thermos bottles I felt a glow of pride that not only was I the first Englishwoman to negotiate the Katta Dawan Pass, but that I was actually on that Roof of the World, which in my wildest day-dreams I had never imagined that I should visit.

It seemed an auspicious omen that almost as soon as we reached the Pamirs, Nadir discovered a small herd of *ovis poli* on the side of one of the mountains between which we were passing. Although there was not a head among them, they held out a promise of better things to come, and I was greatly interested in watching them through my glasses.

From now onwards we saw much more of Nadir, who came from the Sarikol district, and showed his Aryan descent in his boldly cut aquiline features, his big dark eyes, black beard and moustache. He was strikingly handsome, and would have passed very well for a Spaniard, except that, when he took off his white felt Kirghiz hat, his shaven head looked oddly out of keeping with the rest of the picture. He was most intelligent on any matter connected with sport

or the country, and was accustomed to the use of field-glasses, through which his keen eyes swept the hills unceasingly. Yet he did not understand a watch, and our method of computing time conveyed nothing to him; in fact, when my brother spoke to him of "hours" he said reproachfully that he hailed from Sarikol, where such things were unknown. I admired his gift of making every one work; for, although he was merely my brother's huntsman, he arrogated much authority to himself and ordered about the guides, and even our servants, in the most masterful way. He could turn his hand to anything, was accounted an excellent singer and was quite aware of his fine appearance, being fond of decorating his hat with a bunch of primulas that set off his handsome face to advantage. He had of course the defects of his qualities, one of his failings being that he was so determined to pose as omniscient that he occasionally gave us wrong information; moreover, his deep-rooted contempt for the peaceful Kirghiz also led him astray, as he sometimes refused to pay attention to their advice as to tracks and camping grounds.

To return to the march, long boulder-strewn defiles led us eventually into a gravelly waste where we saw ahead of us the Great Karakul Lake, and a group of *akhois* gleaming white in the distance held out hopes of rest and food. But suddenly a violent sandstorm, one of those "mountain devils" that blotted out the landscape, came on so completely, that it was quite a surprise when I found that we had reached a stream, on the further side of which stood the beehive-like dwellings. I was half-blinded as I staggered into a dirty *akhoi*, smelling strongly of the

kids and lambs that had lately been herded behind a prettily coloured matting; and, with my face swollen from the snow and sleet on the Katta Dawan, my eyes sore from the sand and my whole person grimy with dust, I did not feel at my best when four gaily attired Kirghiz women with towering white headgear came to call upon me. One was a good-looking, rosy-cheeked girl, who said she did not know her age, but thought it might be twenty. She had a beautifully embroidered headgear bordered with silver buttons and ending in bossed silver chains which hung over her ears.

I felt too tired to play the hostess well, and found the ladies rather inquisitive, as they fingered my pith-hat, slipped their hands into my fur-lined gloves and examined my habit; in fact the manners of this tribe were the worst I encountered, and so constantly was I peeped at through the many holes in the felt covering of my *akhoi* that I had to shorten all my toilet operations considerably.

Although our baggage yaks had started from camp at 7 o'clock that morning they did not arrive until 8 P.M., and of course we got nothing to eat until an hour later, and before I went to bed I had to open the store boxes in order to provide my brother and Nadir with three days' supplies for a shooting expedition in the mountains bordering the lake, on which they were to start off at dawn on the morrow.

We were now in Russian territory, and at nightfall four Cossacks rode up to the *akhois* with orders to escort us, and next day they accompanied me and the servants to the Russian post where we were to stop. This consisted of a series of rooms opening on to a courtyard, the whole built of brick and surrounded

by a high wall. It had evidently been cleaned up in our honour, and the corporal who was in authority here ushered me into a white-washed room with a table and a couple of stools, and was astounded at my request that he should open the double window. As soon as my belongings had been brought in I mounted Tommy and went off, accompanied by Jafar Bai and my camera, to see the lake. It is exquisitely situated, with a background of snowy peaks picturesquely serrated, the water and the great gravelly plain being ringed about with mountains partly covered with freshly fallen snow, the Trans-Alai range with the magnificent Kaufmann peak rising up into the sky. The water of the lake was an intense sapphire blue, with broad streaks of purple and emerald and a wide band of salt efflorescence round its shores, the whole reminding me of pictures of the Dead Sea.

Captain Cobbold, who visited the lake in 1896, mentioned the sandy ridge running north and south that divided it; but the water has risen since then, and at the time of my visit there was no sign of a division. He also spoke of its fish, and it was disappointing to hear on all sides that there was no life in its bitter waters: it is stagnant, no animal drinks from it, and the only birds I noted during my three days' visit were a pair of Brahminy ducks and an occasional vulture and raven. The salt efflorescence made the ground rotten in places, and once the horses, which Jafar Bai was holding while I photographed the group, sank into a kind of quicksand, from which we had some difficulty in extricating them. This district is called the Khargush Pamir (Pamir of the Hare), and I felt that the name must have been

given in irony, as it is really a desert, boulder-strewn in some parts, sand-strewn in others. The grazing is so poor as to be almost negligible (which probably accounted for the high charges that were levied upon us by our late Kirghiz hosts), and the Russian post-house overlooked a dreary waste of solidified ridges of sand, in appearance much like the low mud mounds raised over the dead. I thought it a most depressing view, but fortunately it did not appear to affect the spirits of the Cossacks; for, on the arrival of half a dozen soldiers who had driven from Osh with supplies, the whole party started dancing in the little courtyard. One man played the concertina, and another, small and well-made, clad in buff coat, blue trousers, long riding-boots and a grey sheepskin cap, would have been a worthy member of the Russian ballet corps so popular in London. He and his partner danced with tremendous zest and agility, though their faces never for an instant relaxed their serious expression as they rehearsed the old themes of attraction and repulsion, masculine boldness seeking to conquer maidenly coyness. Then on a sudden the tender melody would change to something wild and barbaric, and the dancers became warlike, were enemies, exchanged threats, feigned to attack one another and stamped their feet menacingly, somewhat in the manner of the blood-stirring ballet of Prince Igor.

There was much excitement at the post when my brother's first trophy arrived; but the head was small, and as he and Nadir had heard that larger rams might be found elsewhere, he decided that we had better move on.

My readers will see that we had had some trouble in reaching the Pamirs, but when once we had arrived

I was astonished at the ease with which we travelled from place to place. For the greater part of our tour we were on a high plateau which in reality consisted of valleys so filled up with the moraines of the glaciers of centuries ago that, as Sir Francis Younghusband puts it, "the bottoms of these Pamir valleys are level with the higher summits of the Alps." Owing to this, the mountain ranges were often shorn of much of their grandeur as we surveyed them from a height of thirteen or fourteen thousand feet, though some of the panoramas we were privileged to see were unforgettable in their superb majesty.

I have travelled among the Swiss Alps, and know something of the Canadian Rockies, the Elburz Range and the Caucasus, but the mountains of the Pamirs are far wilder and more savage in appearance than these, because of the entire lack of life at their feet. In Switzerland, Canada and the Caucasus the foothills of the great ranges are clad with pine and fir; long grassy slopes gemmed with tiny flowers give a charm to the scenery, and there is usually bird life. Even the barren Elburz has juniper and other scrub on its lower slopes and there are grass and flowers in its valleys; but here we could travel for days in a desolation that was almost terrifying.

Often we did not see a human being during the whole day's march, the only signs of life being an occasional vulture and sometimes a few snow pigeons, crows, choughs and the ubiquitous marmot. It was a red-letter day if I came across swallows, finches, desert larks or the handsome but uneatable Brahminy duck; indeed my horse would actually sometimes shy if we met a Kirghiz on the lonely track.

The climate during our visit in June and July was

one of the most changeable in the world. It was always cold when we left camp between six and seven o'clock, the sky often grey and cloudy and the mountains veiled in mist. After a while the sun would come out and I would throw off my overcoat, but probably would soon put it on again, as icy blasts were in the habit of descending suddenly from the hills. At noon it was often extremely hot, and I found the mid-day halt, even in such favourable spots as on the banks of a stream, very trying, owing to the scorching heat from which there was no escape. There are no trees on the Pamirs, and I have vivid memories of halts on bare hillsides where there was not even a boulder large enough to give shade, and where, in spite of my pith-hat, sun umbrella and thick clothes, I felt as if I were being slowly roasted as we lay exposed to the fierce sunshine. It was difficult to read or write, almost impossible to sleep, and I could appreciate the Jewish prophet's word-picture of "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Our chief alleviation was hot tea from the thermos bottles, our throats and lips being always parched with the dry air, and every now and again we had an unexpected shower-bath. Peals of thunder would reverberate from the hills, over which dark purple storm-clouds had gathered, and suddenly a deluge would descend upon us. But the sky would be as blue as ever after a few moments, though the whole atmosphere felt sensibly refreshed; and later in the day these smart showers would descend in the form of snow. It was always very cold when the sun went down, and in camp I wore all the clothing I could muster and pulled a fur coat over all; my feet were slipped into my big felt boots lined with lamb's wool

and a woollen cap on my head completed the costume in which I sat at our dinner-table. At night my sleeping-bag lay on a thick mattress and a rug, as it is important to have as much below as above, and when my fur coat was thrown over me I was by no means too warm.

We were living at a height of twelve to fourteen thousand feet, and although the air was deliciously keen, like that of some Alpine winter resort, personally I never felt braced up, but was always languid and disinclined for exertion owing to the rarefied atmosphere. Riding did not fatigue me and I could walk for a considerable distance on the level, but I panted at the least effort and had a curious sensation as if a hand were on my throat. Certainly I slept profoundly and felt a continual wish to slumber, both in season and out; but in spite of all the exercise I was taking I had no appetite, and ate only as a matter of duty. Directly we descended to the level of 10,000 feet I felt a different being, and life, appetite and energy returned in a rush, as if by magic.

I had imagined that there would be an abundance of rich grass to support the flocks and herds of the wandering Kirghiz tribes, and was disappointed to find the Pamirs, as far as our tour extended, a dreary waste, often covered with boulders and gravel from the moraines of the mountains, with only small strips of pasturage at intervals. In general the grazing was scanty, and the inhabitants, who number but a few thousands, must often have a struggle to support life during the winter. Even during the summer they move their flocks frequently to fresh pastures, for the grass is soon eaten up, and a large popula-

tion would starve. In narratives of travel in the Pamirs the provision of food for the baggage animals is always mentioned as one of the difficulties to be encountered, and it was fortunate for us that my brother's official position saved us from anxiety on this score. We had been obliged to carry several loads of barley from Kashgar, but the local *Begs* were able to arrange for fresh supplies of forage at some points of our journey, and led us usually to camping grounds where the grazing was fair.

When we bade farewell to the Great Karakul Lake we spent three days on the Russian cart road, riding the ninety miles to Pamirsky Post on the Murghab River. On the morning of our start snow was falling fast, and as I dragged myself out of my warm sleeping-bag at 3.30 A.M. I felt thankful that my lot was not cast permanently in the Pamirs. But, when once we were on horseback and muffled up, the going left nothing to complain of. We rode along a broad unmetalled track made for the most part by the simple expedient of removing the boulders which thickly strewed these sterile valleys, having been brought down from the ranges bounding us on either side. This road was marked at intervals by piles of stones measuring it into versts and half-versts—five versts being equal to three English miles. The distances were painted on a stone on every other heap, though often the figures were placed upside down, and now and again were omitted altogether. All our servants were provided with smoked glasses, but would not use them at first, Sattur, for example, wearing his across his lips or hanging under his chin, until after a while he came to understand that they were of real benefit.

Our Cossack escort, consisting of a corporal and three soldiers, were cheery sturdy youths, clad in buff uniforms with blue facings and long buff greatcoats. Their forage-caps were set rakishly on one side, and the corporal brushed his thick yellow hair into a big well-greased roll which almost hid his forehead, and was evidently proud of his personal appearance. They wore blue glasses, a necessary precaution against the glare of the sun on the snow, and rode handy little ponies as born horsemen. I felt that they must have but a dull time in these outposts of the Russian Empire with so few of the amenities of life, especially as their pay was at the low rate of one and fourpence a month, supplemented by rations of meat and flour, forage for their horses, and the provision of a uniform and three shirts annually. Their service lasts for three years, after which they are free to return to their farms for the rest of their lives. Each man has a rifle and a limited amount of ammunition, and the corporal was for ever on the look-out for something to shoot at.

At one part of our second day's march the road wound over a pass in the hills, and my brother and Nadir, who had espied game in a valley beneath us, went off to stalk while the rest of the party rode forward. On a cliff to our right the corporal pointed out a large group of vultures feeding on a dead sheep and emitted shrill whistles that made the great birds hop about in a most ungainly fashion. I watched them with interest, which changed to anger when the Cossack let off his rifle at them, making our horses shy violently. The birds, though unharmed, were so gorged that they could hardly rise from the ground, but my brother's quarry, startled at the shot,

made off and escaped, and Nadir became livid with rage as he endeavoured to explain to the Russian how ill-timed his love of sport had been on that occasion. During these three days the country was monotonous in the extreme, the stone-strewn plateaux having hardly a sign of life. At one spot, where the hills were formed of hardened mud, Nadir told us that Mr. Haydon, the well-known geologist, whom he had accompanied on a tour in the Pamirs, had found fossils. We were anxious to see some for ourselves, and he led us to a curiously shaped hill where, after some groping, he disinterred two or three sea-shells, a sight that filled me with wonder as I realized that this mighty Roof of the World, with its valleys twelve to fourteen thousand feet high, had long ages ago been under the sea, and indeed sea-sand composed much of the mountain whose side we were probing. That afternoon, between the intermittent showers of snow, we had the curious spectacle of a violent thunderstorm in the range to our right, another raging at the same time in the mountains to our left, while overhead were brilliant sunshine and a bright blue sky.

On the afternoon of the third day, as we neared Pamirsky Post, we were met by a couple of *Mingbashis* or Headmen, gorgeous in purple robes, broad silver-embossed belts and snowy turbans. These officials led us down the valley to the Murghab, one of the head waters of the classic Oxus, and here we were warmly welcomed by the Russian commandant with his Cossack escort. He had most kindly ordered out his carriage for me, and though I should have much preferred to stick to my horse, politeness made me dismount and do my best to scramble into what

was really a box on wheels. As the ponies were too fidgety for me to mount by the wheel, and there was no step, I fear that I got in with a sad lack of dignity, and then I was hurled from side to side of the conveyance as the coachman whipped up his horses to a breakneck speed. We tore along at a great pace to a stone fort built on a spur of the mountains above the river, and galloped through a gateway of the high wall that surrounded it into a large courtyard. The Cossack captain insisted on putting us up, turning out of his own carpet-hung room for my benefit, and, as his quarters faced the barracks of the soldiers, I had from the windows a good view of lounging Cossacks, who spent much of their time playing with a crowd of thick-coated, quarrelsome dogs or shouting at their ponies, which were driven in at sunset from the grazing grounds along the banks of the river.

We met here a colonel of engineers who was engaged in putting up signalling posts on the hills in the vicinity, in order that communication might be established with the headquarters at Kharuk; for there was no telegraph wire connecting Pamirsky Post with the outer world. As he and our host spoke only their own language I could take no part in the conversation at supper, and, moreover, I felt very sleepy, since the meal began at nine o'clock, an hour when I, who had risen at half-past three, wanted to be in bed! A diversion was provided in the shape of a wolf-cub, a quaint and engaging little creature, but not the sort of animal that I should care to bring up as a household pet.

Next morning I grasped the difference between English and Russian meal-times, and when at half-

past nine there was no sign of breakfast, my brother and I went down to our camp, pitched by the river, where we had a meal and I gave out stores and made arrangements for our clothes to be washed. We were now at a comparatively low level, and it was warm as an English summer's day, with just a "nip" in the air: but the long narrow valley must be a dreary abode in winter, as it is shut in by lofty mountains from which the wild sheep descend to graze and then fall an easy prey to the hunters. As we stood by the river we spoke of Lieutenant Wood, the first Englishman to travel in the Pamirs, who wrote of the yak as an unknown animal. But Lord Dunmore and Major Roche were the first to visit Pamirsky Post after the occupation of this desolate region by the Russians, and the former gives a description of how in 1893 the officers and Cossacks were living in *akhois* furnished with brick stoves.

Just below the fort there was a squalid little village of mud and stone shanties inhabited by Kirghiz, and here were collected great bundles of wild sheep horns ready to be sent to Tashkent, where they are used to decorate native saddles or to make knife-handles or combs, the hunter receiving only a rouble and a half—less than three shillings—for the horns and skin.

My brother and the commandant discussed where we had best go in search of sport on the way to Sarikol, and they eventually decided on a valley three marches off, two of which lay along the Russian road to Kharuk, and with many compliments on both sides we left Pamirsky Post. Most of the country along our route was absolutely sterile, except when, after crossing low passes, we descended now and again to

the river, on the banks of which was scanty grazing and tamarisk scrub, just enough to support life for a few camels, yaks and ponies. As a rule the marmots were the only creatures that broke the lifeless monotony of the marches, and whenever it was sunny the little animals sat upon their hind legs in front of their burrows, uttering excited cries as they saw us pass. They were larger than those with which I was familiar in Persia, and were orange-coloured instead of buff, their noses, paws and tails being black. They hibernate during the long winter, and the Kirghiz affirm that when they emerge from their seclusion they have no hair on their bodies. They also sleep during the middle of the day. My brother computed that they must pass about 80 per cent of their time in slumber, and had a contempt for these sadly idle creatures. But they appealed to me because of their cheery squeakings and lively scuttling to earth. They live on the roots of grasses, and are apparently independent of water, for large colonies are often situated miles from any stream. We had to ride carefully in places in order to avoid the entrances to their burrows, which were sometimes in the middle of the track.

At the end of our second day's march we met Colonel Yagello, Commissioner of the Pamirs, on his way to Pamirsky Post, and as he spoke French I enjoyed the conversation of a cultivated man, keenly interested in the geology of the country, and anxious to exploit the mineral wealth, which he said was considerable.

At the time of our visit to Pamirsky Post there was great excitement, because the local *Mingbashi* had been dismissed from office, and in order to mark his

resentment had collected four hundred families of his tribe and fled with them across the Afghan border into Wakhan. The Cossack officer informed my brother that immediately after our departure he intended to pursue and bring back the fugitives. As such an action would have been looked upon at Kabul as constituting an invasion of Afghanistan, and would have strengthened the anti-Ally party in that state, my brother strongly urged our host to await the arrival of Colonel Yagello before taking action, and finally persuaded him to adopt this course. When we met the Commissioner my brother discussed the Wakhan question with him, but at first the latter said that he was determined to pursue the recalcitrant *Mingbashi*, exclaiming that the honour of Russia was at stake. However, after long arguments he promised not to cross the Afghan frontier, but to send representations to the Governor of Badakshan, who was also the ruler of Wakhan, and thus settle the matter without using force.

Our camp at the shooting ground was at the bottom of a long valley running into the mountains, with grazing on the banks of a stream for our animals and a clump of *akhois* for ourselves and the servants. Here we halted for some days, and, while my brother left long before dawn for the hills, I amused myself by riding about, photographing, entertaining Kirghiz ladies, rocking the boxes of stores and doing the hundred and one odd jobs that accumulate when one is travelling. I was fond of collecting the tiny, short-stalked Alpine flora, and found edelweiss, gentians, white and pale blue, little mauve vetches, cream and yellow flowers of the hawkweed order, pyrethrums and camomiles, while minute cream, mauve and pink

blossoms exuded from the edges of unpromising-looking dull-green patches. Were it not for the butterc p and the yellow or white cistus the flora would e hardly noticeable; but at a lower level I found yellow poppies, large yellow labiatae, candy-tuft that scented the air with honey, and many plants that I could not identify.

When my brother had secured his fourth head we left the valley, our way leading us along a river that was ice-bound in long stretches although it was now July, reminding me of Mr. Douglas Freshfield's remark that the climate of the Roof of the World is nine months of winter and three of cold weather.

Now and again we came across fine *ovis poli* skulls lying on the ground, and I chose a fine head to keep as a memento of my visit. One day a young *poli* stood in our path, allowing us to get quite close to it before it took alarm, and even then it only trotted along in front until a dog that belonged to the caravan behind rushed after it, and the pretty creature made off at once into the hills.

I had been told that the rich Kirghiz hung their *akhois* with embroidered silks and covered the ground with beautiful carpets, but we never came across such luxury. I was always on the look-out for carpets, but saw few that I liked, the old ones being either torn or covered with tiny burns made by sparks from the fires. One woven with a modification of the well-known pine-cone pattern in indigo on a beautiful rose ground took my fancy greatly, but alas, it had a huge hole in the centre. The design of one carpet was a series of square crosses in diagonal rows; half of them framed a conventionalized *swastika*, an emblem of good fortune, and the other half enclosed

BRINGING IN AN *OVIS POLI*.

(Nadir with rifle.)

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representations of various implements. It does not sound alluring, yet it was an attractive product of the loom and had fine reds, blues, browns and greens in its colouring. Elsewhere I met a commonplace pattern of conventionalized flowers in small blocks linked together by lines, but the beautiful vegetable dyes of the old carpets are unfortunately being ousted by the crude aniline tints so much in vogue at Khotan.

My brother often had some difficulty in arranging the marches, for the Kirghiz have no notion of either time or distance as we understand it, and could never tell us how long a stage would be unless they could compare it with that of the previous day. As a result we seldom knew when we should arrive at our camping ground, the distance being sometimes considerably greater than we had imagined and at other times much less. But such slight drawbacks matter little to the true traveller who has succumbed to the lure of the Open Road, and to the glamour of the Back of Beyond.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ARYANS OF SARIKOL

A SARIKOLI LOVE SONG

1

Alas, my unfaithful Love!
Alas, my inconstant Heaven!
I am become thin as a blade of grass from craving for thee.

2

Oh, thou heavenly Beauty
Whose ears are adorned with gold,
Would that I might become thy closest companion.

3

Thy breasts are as a newly plucked apple.
Oh, mount thy swift steed and ride with me.
When its shoes are worn, I will replace them with silver.

We left the Russian Pamirs by a pass that seemed, when we reached its summit, to have an almost interminable descent, as we saw miles of a stony track stretching out below our feet. Half-way down we were met by a contingent of tribesmen clad in long red, blue, yellow, or crimson coats, with the white felt Kirghiz hats or leather and sheepskin caps, their bedding of vividly coloured felts being strapped on to their saddles; and when we finally emerged from the long winding valley, great Muztagh Ata was so close that it seemed as if we could easily ride up to its snow-line. We were now back again in the delightful

uplands of Chinese Turkestan, and for the first time for many days we saw what might by courtesy be called a house. It consisted of two dark and dirty rooms opening into a squalid courtyard surrounded by a mud wall, and I felt that the Kirghiz *akhoi* was a far preferable dwelling to this, as it can be moved from place to place and its surroundings are thus kept clean. In the few instances where the Kirghiz had built a walled enclosure for their flocks, and in consequence occupied the same camping ground permanently, the place was quite uninhabitable to Europeans.

We made one of our longest halts on the fine grazing grounds of Tagharma, a broad plain with encampments at intervals. A group of *akhois* had been prepared for us, and a big crowd welcomed my brother as we rode into camp, many Sarikolis having ridden over from Tashkurghan, their capital, some sixteen miles off, to greet him. We were now at an altitude of some nine thousand feet, and the lassitude and the "hand-at-my-throat" feeling that I had experienced on the Roof of the World left me entirely, and I revelled in the delicious weather, which was neither too hot nor too cold. It was delightful to stroll about the valley in the evenings, my heavy fur coat and wool-lined boots being no longer needed, and I was charmed with the sheets of mauve primulas, the big white cistus, white and mauve anemones, pretty blue daisies with yellow centres, millions of little cream flowers with a most deceptive resemblance to a daisy, the familiar dandelion, and others. In the hills I came across a curious plant, dark brownish-red, the size and shape of a sheep's tongue, which had no leaves, but pushed its way out of the sandy

soil. It was rough to the touch when pulled up, but white and fleshy under the outer skin, and was heavy, with no distinctive smell.

One day the Kirghiz gave a display of the *baigu*, or "goat game," which is the national form of sport. A goat was killed, and after its head and entrails had been removed and all its bones broken, the skin was stitched up and it was then thrown into the middle of a throng of men mounted on their wiry little ponies who constituted the *mêlée*. The first man that succeeded in picking it up tucked it under his thigh, holding it with one hand while he rode off, pursued by the others eager to wrest it from him. If he managed to keep his booty while he galloped round a flag and returned to the goal, he won the round and the game began afresh. The riders often held their short-handled whips in their mouths in order to have the right hand free when they bent down from their saddles to seize the goat, but owing to the shortness of their stirrups they had not particularly good seats and seemed to come off easily. I noticed that there was no excitement on the part of the ponies, and their masters could keep them at a canter only by tugging at their mouths, using the whip and belabouring their sides with their long boots. We watched the game from the far side of a stream that surrounded the playing-ground, but every now and again were obliged to retreat hurriedly; for some of the performers would plunge into the rivulet with a great splashing, or even leap it, and ride amuck among the spectators. Our servants and the large crowd of onlookers did their best with shouts and crackings of whips to keep the players to their own side of the water; but the

THE GAME OF *BAIGU*—THE MELÉE.

Page 150 (a).

THE GAME OF *BAIGU*—THE PICK-UP.

Page 150 (*b*).

THE GAME OF *BAIGU*—THE VICTOR.

Page 150 (*c*).

Kirghiz were half mad with excitement, yelling, shrieking, pulling at one another, and never ceasing to urge their unfortunate ponies.

My brother gave a coloured silk handkerchief to the victor of each round, a gift much appreciated, and when these were used up, lengths of fine white mull muslin were awarded, which would be used by the women, who had been left in the *akhois*, to wind on the framework of their headgear. After about an hour, seeing that the grass-fed ponies were becoming exhausted, he offered one big prize for a round that was to be the last, and so the game closed. The lofty mountains that ringed us made a glorious background to an animated scene that was full of colour, the riders fastening back the skirts of their gay coats to get them out of the way and thus displaying the brilliant linings.

Baigu did not commend itself to me when I learnt that the ponies were often forced to play for four hours on end, and were then tightly tied up and left without food and water until the next morning, when they were turned loose to graze. In fact, the inhabitants of Chinese Turkestan struck us as very bad horsemasters, and one might almost say that their ideal was for their unlucky animals to have no food, no drink, and no rest. For example: the practice was to tie up the heads of the baggage animals when they reached the halting-place, the poor things being left without food and water for a period in proportion to the length of the march. If possible their masters never allowed them to lie down, stirring them up if they did so during grazing, and tying them up tightly at night, the idea being that the legs of a horse swell if he is allowed to repose himself.

Again and again I have seen horses tethered to trees growing on high banks, the poor animals being left in discomfort for hours owing to the uncertain foothold.

My brother had a constant struggle to induce our grooms to water our horses during our long mid-day halts, old Jafar Bai asserting that they would go lame if allowed to drink. On one occasion when my particular mount took to limping he was very triumphant, and told every one that it was owing to our way of flying in the face of custom with regard to the water question. But his triumph was short-lived, for when the grey's shoe was removed it was found that the farrier had cut the hoof ruthlessly in order to make it fit the shoe—a common practice. My brother's plan of picketing our animals with long ropes while grazing also came in for much censure, and was said to be the cause of any malady that the water theory did not cover.

As we had not tasted fresh fish since leaving Europe, we enjoyed a large but somewhat tasteless variety that was caught in the river which meandered through the Tagharma Valley, and thought it would be interesting to do some angling ourselves. We had brought fishing-rods with us, having been told that the rivers simply swarmed with a species of trout, and one afternoon, when the heat of the day was over, we sallied forth attended by a horde of bare-legged Kirghiz who carried our landing-net, and who so scared the few fish we saw that not a single nibble rewarded our efforts. On enquiry I found that the natives, who evidently scorned our orthodox methods, were accustomed to dam up the shallow river in suitable places with clods of earth, making a

cul de sac into which they drove the fish, which then fell an easy prey.

It was a proud day for Nadir when we left Tagharma to go to Tashkurghan, his native place. I was sorry to leave the pleasant grassy valley dotted with groups of *akhois*, from which shaggy dogs in charge of the flocks of sheep and goats rushed out to bark at us. Nearer and nearer we approached the mountains, until we reached a gorge through which ran the Sarikol River. This defile led us into the wide Sarikol Valley, where we were met by a big group of its inhabitants headed by the *Aksakal*, or British Agent, a native of Lahore. They had as usual erected a tent, and pressed *pillaus*, tea, sweetmeats, and little squares of tough native bread upon us. Nadir, who was a kind of understudy to the *Aksakal*, with the title of Watchman, proudly brought his little son to show me. He had been met by three generations of strikingly handsome relatives, and all round us were Persian-speaking Aryans with no resemblance whatever to the surrounding Kirghiz tribes. They were handsome, well-built men and youths, with aquiline noses, clear-cut features, fine dark eyes and thick black beards and moustaches; and one and all looked intelligent and alert.

As we rode past the cemetery on our way to camp, I noticed that the tombs were more ornate than those of the Kirghiz, and was struck by curious clay erections at one end of them which reminded me of rabbits sitting up. These, I was told, were intended to hold lights, a custom which had nothing to do with Mohamedan practice, but probably was borrowed from Buddhism.

Our *akhois* were pitched on a stretch of grazing

near a branch of the river which cuts up the valley with its numerous tributaries and is so deep, and runs so swiftly in summer, that every year without fail it takes a toll of human and animal life. High above us towered the long ridge on which Tashkurghan is built. As the town is printed in large type on all the maps I was surprised to find it but a small collection of dilapidated mud houses, many of which were in ruins. It is, however, the spot alluded to by the Chinese traveller Hiuen-Tsiang, who visited it in the seventh century. On the highest point stood a large castellated Chinese fort, and not far off, in an equally dominating position, was the small Russian fort, where an officer, his wife, and a troop of Cossacks were quartered. The young captain called upon us, saying that his wife had not seen a European woman for two years, and asked us to dine with them that evening, while in our turn we entertained them in camp. They must have led a very dreary life as they were cut off almost completely from the outer world, and there are but few resources in the Sarikol Valley, especially during the long winter. The Russian lady was delighted to meet me, though, as she could speak no language save her own, conversation was very difficult. She took me into her tiny garden, a walled-in plot which the Cossacks had cleared of boulders and in which a few poplar saplings and some minute cabbages and lettuces were struggling to gain a livelihood from the barren ground. It almost brought the tears to my eyes when she pointed out with intense pride a solitary bloom of mignonette, the only flower in this mockery of a garden, though it was mid-July. To amuse me she told the Cossacks to release a couple of wolf-cubs kept in a den in the courtyard, and when

the poor little beasts made a dash for liberty I secretly hoped that they would escape, in spite of the Persian proverb which says, "To be kind to the wolf is to be cruel to the lamb."

Though the Chinese Governor met my brother when he entered Tashkurghan, providing tea for him on the road and calling upon him, he was evidently unwilling to admit Europeans into the fort, and gave what I imagine must be the stock excuse, that he had not the wherewithal to entertain an English guest. When I read Sir Thomas Gordon's account of his visit to Sarikol in *The Roof of the World*, I was struck by the fact that the Chinese Governor of that day—it was 1874—put off Sir Thomas and his party with the same excuse when they wished to return his call.

The Sarikolis are Mohamedans of the Ismaili sect, and acknowledge the Agha Khan as their spiritual head. They talk Persian with a somewhat uncouth accent, and the very warm welcome they gave my brother was partly due to their delight at hearing him speak the Persian of Persia.

One day we crossed the many branches of the river and clambered up a steep neck in the hills in order to have a view of the long valley leading up to the stony Taghdumbash Pamir. At our feet small hamlets were dotted about, surrounded by badly-grown crops of wheat, barley, peas, lucerne and mustard. The plant last mentioned is grown for its oil, which is used in the little native lamps, and I was told that the Sarikolis show traces of their fire-worshipping ancestry by never blowing out a flame, thus copying the practice of the Zoroastrians. I was much interested to find in this backwater of the world

a close connection with the bygone legends of Persia, Nadir informing us that Mount Afrasiab was the name of the hill behind us, and pointing out a hill of remarkable shape just opposite across the valley, saying that it was Besitun, the scene of Ferhad's almost impossible engineering feat. Let me tell this famous legend of old Persia as far as possible in his own words:

Now King Afrasiab[1] greatly loved the fair Shirin his wife and cared for no other woman, and his wrath was kindled when he perceived that her beauty had cast a spell over Ferhad the architect, who became as a man distraught. Near the palace of the monarch lay Mount Besitun and behind it was a stream that ran down from the hills above and gave the mighty king an idea by which to cure the vain passion of his servant. Therefore he summoned Ferhad to his presence and swore to him that if he could bore a tunnel in the mountain through which the stream could run he should have the lovely Queen as his reward.

Afrasiab knew that the task was not in the power of man to perform, but love increased the strength of Ferhad an hundredfold, and at the end of a year the tunnel was nigh completion and the king was greatly alarmed. At last he thought of a plan by which he hoped to keep his beloved wife and yet not break his royal oath. Therefore, one day when Ferhad was in a perilous position on the face of the rock, a royal servant suddenly announced to him that beautiful Shirin was dead; and her lover, losing his foothold from the shock, fell headlong from the mountain and was killed on the spot.

There was also a further proof of the work of Ferhad in the shape of a long furrow on a rock, which all the inhabitants believed was made by the Persian's chisel.

While we enjoyed the wide view from our eyrie

[1] The monarch in question was actually Khusru Parviz.

NASIR ALI KHAN, A *MUKI* OF SARIKOL.

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and listened to Nadir we became aware that an old man in a flowered coat, snowy turban and slippers, was struggling up the steep track, helped along by two servants. It was the *muki*, the priest of the Sarikolis, and a man of great importance in the valley, as I grasped when our *shikari* hastened to meet him and kissed his hands and those of his servants. The old gentleman, panting with his exertions, had come to offer us hospitality and insisted that we should descend and drink tea in his house. We were soon ushered into a little plastered room with an elaborately carved wooden ceiling and seated ourselves at a table covered with a red silk cloth, on which were biscuits, raisins, almonds, and loaf sugar, three or four lumps of which the servants tried to put into the little Russian glasses of tea which they handed us. The principal men of the district squatted on the floor and listened as the *muki* told my brother how he travelled every two years to India bearing the offerings of the Faithful to the Agha Khan. Our host was very anxious for us to wait while his invisible womenkind prepared a feast in our honour. Though we declined this invitation our visit did good; for two brothers, rich landowners who had long been at enmity with one another, became reconciled that morning when they met to pay their respects to the Consul.

On our return to camp I received the *Aksakal's* wife, a Kashgar woman who came gorgeously attired in an embroidered blue silk coat and brought her three children with her. One was a most attractive little girl of five, dressed in a striped silk coat with gold embroidered green velvet cap, under which hung her four black plaits of hair. She enjoyed looking

at our illustrated papers, and where children were depicted she pointed them out as being herself or her brothers, according to size. When Sattur gave her tea she was imperative about the quantity of milk and the number of lumps of sugar that she wanted, and I was thankful that she condescended to approve of the strings of coral that I gave her and allowed me to fill her pockets and those of her brothers with fancy biscuits.

The Sarikolis are very fond of music and dancing, and a troupe of youths led by a man who banged the drum in masterly fashion performed for our amusement. A couple played on pipes and the others sang many songs interspersed with dances, one small boy doing most complicated steps and waving his arms gracefully. All had their hands hidden by the sleeves of their thick blue, red, buff, or striped coats, and wore white felt Kirghiz hats with black brims, and either leather or clumsy felt riding boots. They sang with great *entrain* and some of the tunes were very pleasing, though monotonous, while others had a curious accompaniment of howls—I can describe it in no other way. The performance lasted for hours, and every now and then the troupe divided into two groups which sang alternately to one another something in this style:

First Group: "Your cheeks are like tulips."
Second Group: "Your eyes are dark as spring-water."

Only the old people remember the songs of war and fighting; for now the young are not interested in these and only care to listen to themes of love. Iftikhar Ahmad kindly took down for me the words of two of these songs, one of which forms the heading of this chapter. This is the other:

SARIKOLI DANCERS.

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The Song

Oh, my faithless Beloved whose garments are of gold
The whole world is praising you,
You are indeed the daughter of your mother.
Your silver head-dress gleams ;
Your teeth are white as pearls,
And your lips red as coral.
Oh, beautiful one with the dancing eyes !

Chorus

I praise you, but the world blames you.
You enter the feast with pomp.
Your cloak is of silk and your turban is wound twice round your head.
My love is fairer than all other women.
A good mother has given birth to a most beautiful daughter.
On her bosom she wears pearls.
These pearls are gifts from me.
Her boots are scarlet of the softest leather,
And she is attired in a cloak from India.

Nowadays the Sarikol Valley is at peace. The walled town on the ridge is half in ruins, while the defences of the villages below are full of breaches and most of its former inhabitants live outside it.

The Sarikolis make but a scanty livelihood in their beloved valley. It is covered with snow during several months of the year, and their meagre crops of wheat, barley and peas were plentifully mixed with weeds. Their women enjoy a good position and are not veiled; monogamy is the custom of the country and divorce is rare. They are a hospitable race, and when a man gives a feast he never appears at it, and comes into the room only when it is over, at the urgent appeal of his guests. When these thank him he says that the collation he has set before them is merely " a refuge beneath a rock," and when the guests depart he speeds them on their way with the wish that their " road may be white."

They have a curious custom of placing a newly-born child in a skin full of powdered cow-dung, its head only being left outside. The contents of the bag are changed every day, and during the winter a hot stone is placed at the feet of the infant.

When the time came for us to leave, my chief regret was that I must bid farewell to the particular view of Muztagh Ata seen from our camp, its snowy dome seeming to block up one end of the valley and looking its grandest and most majestic, especially in the moonlight.

Our servants were now very efficient. Jafar Bai was an invaluable packer, and so ready to turn his hand to any job that I always fancied he was put upon by the other servants. He looked after our interests in every way, and was so trustworthy that I often handed him the keys of the store-boxes to give out supplies if I were busy. I would not have granted the same privilege to lusty Daoud, who purloined all he could and always said that he had *hich*, or nothing, in his particular store-box. Indeed my old factotum once neatly summed up the contrast between my cook and my butler by remarking, "Daoud always tells you that he has nothing, but Sattur always has everything."

Daoud, however, could rise to an occasion, and he invariably surpassed himself if we had guests; but honest Sattur took a pride in making our tea, sugar, and so on, last as long as possible. He was more like a child than a grown-up man with wife and family dependent upon him, and at first he used to bring one cup or plate at a time from his boxes, when laying the table or producing tiffin in the open. We remonstrated about his slow method, and one day

he arrived carrying everything in a coloured table-cloth and laughing softly to himself as he pictured our surprise at his cleverness.

On the return journey to Kashgar our first camp was at Issak Boulak, a secluded little valley high up in the hills. The name means Hot Springs, and we reached it by crossing a series of steep nullahs, up and down the crumbling banks of which our horses had to scramble, as our guide could find no track. At last we arrived at a fold of the mountains, within which was an orange-coloured stream fed by hot sulphur springs that gushed out of the hillside at a temperature of 150° Fahrenheit. My brother and I clambered up to the source of the water, and I dipped a finger cautiously into one of the two springs that were bursting out of the barren rock and pouring into a big pool below, which is visited by sufferers from rheumatism, who sit all day in the hot water. Sattur brought a can of almost boiling water for my bath, bursting into giggles as he poured it in, so mirth-inspiring did he find this labour-saving phenomenon.

Issak Boulak was an isolated spot at the back of beyond, and behind our camp a long twisting defile led into the very heart of the mountains, making me hope to come across some wild creature as we turned corner after corner; but the only sign of life was a hawk that swooped so low as to brush my hat. All the birds we saw during our tour were wonderfully tame. Hoopoes and choughs flew close as if to observe us, the pretty yellow wagtails merely hopped aside as we passed, the cheery desert-larks almost let us tread upon them, while pigeons and partridges had little fear of the gun.

At our halt at Subashi I had my first experience of riding a yak, or *kutass*. Though I had watched these creatures with their formidable horns moving with ungainly gait over their pastures and had laughed at the uncouth gambols of their calves at play, I had no wish for a more intimate acquaintance with them. But one morning, as we looked at the tremendous mass of Muztagh Ata, my brother proposed that we should try to reach one of the glaciers that hang on its mighty slopes, and accordingly we set off mounted on yaks. Instead of a bridle, the animal has a rope passed through the cartilage of the nose, and, though this is sufficient for the experienced, in the case of novices it is necessary to have the mount led. I sat astride on the peaked Chinese saddle, and found the movement of the *kutass* comfortable though slow, and we were soon working our way up the flank of the mountain without track of any kind. The ugly, good-tempered Kirghiz who led my yak wore a padded cotton coat striped with scarlet, blue, black and yellow ; his long riding-boots were of red leather, and his velvet cap both lined and bordered with fur, while a cloth tied round his waist held his knife and various odds and ends, among which was a hunch of native bread. " I don't know Persian," he remarked to me in that tongue, and " I do not speak Turki " was my reply ; but in spite of the language difficulty we understood one another quite well, and I did my part in urging my mount when it hung back and pulled at the nose-rope. It was a long stiff climb to reach the glacier, and all the yaks were panting, grunting and gnashing their teeth before we dismounted and stumbled over the mass of big boulders that were hurled in confusion one upon another just below the

MUZTAGH ATA—THE SNOUT OF A GLACIER.

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immensely thick curtain of ice. The altitude took my breath away, even the hardy Kirghiz complained of splitting headaches, and a big yellow dog, guardian doubtless of some flocks feeding on the scanty grazing below, made a sudden appearance and gave vent to the most lugubrious howls. The Kirghiz never venture into the fastnesses of Muztagh Ata, believing the "Father of the Snows" to be haunted by fairies, by camels of supernatural whiteness, and by the sound of drums, this last being possibly the thunder of avalanches. It was thrilling to be on the slopes of this great mountain, its crest as yet unscaled by any human being, in spite of the efforts of Sir Aurel Stein, and we were entranced with the magnificent mountain panorama from our point of vantage. As the descent was very steep we remounted our yaks, and my brother led off along the mountain side. But my guide was of an enterprising nature, and to my horror we started down what appeared to me to be a sheer precipice. Expostulations were of no avail; he turned a deaf ear to them; so I rammed my feet into the stirrups, leant back as far as I could, and clung to the pommel of my saddle, feeling that I might at any moment be flung over the head of my steed. I confess that my heart was in my mouth as my *kutass* accomplished the descent in a series of long slides, always recovering itself when I imagined that it was just about to fall headlong and bring us both to disaster. My opinion of it as a mount was unbounded, and it crowned its perfections by picking its way unerringly among the boulders that were piled up on either side of the glacier stream along which our route lay. Wild rhubarb was growing in profusion, and I made my boy gather it,

as we had not tasted fresh fruit or vegetables for some weeks, and the Russian jam I had bought at Kashgar had fermented and gone off like bombs when the bottles were opened, though Daoud's apricot conserve had borne the long journey perfectly.

We had had a superb view from the flank of Muztagh Ata, but nothing to compare with that which we enjoyed from the shore of Little Lake Karakul that lies at the foot of this giant of the Pamirs. Here to the north stood up in all its grandeur the great mountain barrier separating us from Kashgar, which we had looked upon as some enchanting vision when seen at rare intervals from the roof of the Consulate. The "Father of the Snows" and its rival—the natives call it Kungur—rose sheer from the lake, in company with peak behind peak, all nobly serrated and wrapped in eternal snow. Guardians of the Roof of the World, their proud virginal crests, as yet untrodden by the foot of the explorer, offer an indescribable attraction to him who has felt the lure of the Inaccessible.

Our tour was now drawing to a close. I felt a keen regret at leaving our free life in these uplands and exchanging an *akhoi* for a house, and I had also become fond of the friendly Kirghiz. These people are most devoted to their children. In one camp the *Beg* brought his little daughter to see me, and my guest played tune after tune on her rough home-made *sitar*, her fingers working with wonderful agility. In fact, her repertoire was so extensive that I feared the performance would never end; so I showed her a string of coral, which made her stop short in a glow of rapturous excitement. It was pretty to see her holding out the ornament to her proud father and

A KIRGHIZ AND HIS DAUGHTER.

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then whispering in his ear to ask him to express her thanks, and finally putting on the necklace with shy smiles for the donor. A sturdy boy, some twelve years old, also rises in my memory, son of a *Beg's* wife. This lady, who, I was told, practically ruled the tribe, was most pleasant and voluble and called upon me with her boy, bringing offerings of dirty lumps of cheese, a skin of rancid fat, and a strip of woven carpet. It was the fifth day of Ramazan and she expressed much regret that the fast forbade her to sample my tea and biscuits; but Kuli did full justice to everything, drinking with loud noises and waving his teaspoon excitedly, as he had never seen such an object and could not understand its use. Next day I noticed that he was taking an active part in the "goat game," a green silk handkerchief that I had given his mother being tied round his waist. His father was giving the performance in my brother's honour, and the players accompanied us as we left their encampment for a new halting-place.

The game began with a series of wild yells, and so recklessly did the players dash about that we were really in danger of being ridden down, in spite of shouts of warning from Jafar Bai and our Kirghiz guide. To our amusement Daoud joined in, forcing his pony into a reluctant canter; but, as he could not bend low enough from the saddle to pick up the goat when it lay on the ground, he was jeered at by Sattur and our less ambitious followers. The game finally ended on the shore of Lake Bulunkul, which is so choked up with sand from the hills rising close to it that, when we crossed, we found it practically dry ground with shallow streams meandering over its bed. It was towards the end of July and

our horses were tormented by horse-flies, which we avoided as best we could by cantering whenever the rough ground allowed. In camp the grass was full of mosquitoes, which as we walked rose up in swarms and fastened upon us greedily. Luckily their bite was mild, and as this was our only experience of these pests we could not complain. Since we had left Lake Bulunkul we had made, as it were, a loop and returned again to Kuntigmas, where we halted for two days in order to meet Sir Aurel Stein, who was bound for the Russian Pamirs and Persia.

We could not return to Kashgar by way of the Gez defile, as it would have been impossible to cross the river, which was now in full flood; therefore we traversed the difficult Ulughat Pass, which is open only during the summer, and is dangerous for animals at the best of times. A long stony valley led us past great glaciers hollowed into caves, the entrances to which were fringed with stalactites of ice, and the mountains seemed to close in more and more forbiddingly. I confess that my heart almost failed me when we reached the foot of the pass and I saw a series of zigzag tracks faintly marked on what seemed to me to be the face of a precipice. It would have been impossible to negotiate such a place on horseback; but yaks were in readiness, and I mounted mine thankfully, with a grateful remembrance of the shaggy bull that had carried me up the flank of Muztagh Ata.

But I was now to learn that there are yaks *and* yaks. The animals assigned to my brother and me strongly objected to the job, and, looking at the path ahead, I did not wonder. They jibbed constantly, refused to proceed, and, what was most unpleasant,

took to backing off the path and sliding in perilous fashion on to the long slopes of shifting rubble. They seemed quite callous to the pulling of their nose-ropes, and, though I clung to the peak of my saddle and vigorously belaboured the shaggy sides of my mount, it returned to the track only when it pleased. I became nervous on my brother's account, because the fastenings of his saddle broke twice, and if he had not realized in time that he was sitting on the yak's tail instead of in the middle of its back, he would have fallen right over the precipice. He had fastened the thong of his hunting-crop round the branching horns of his *kutass*, thereby saving himself from disaster. To help matters both of us imitated the cry with which the Kirghiz encouraged their animals: "Halbin! Halbin! Halbin! Ha!" These men felt the height considerably and rested at intervals, holding their heads in their hands as they were suffering from mountain-sickness—the pass was over 16,000 feet—and one poor boy lay down early in the ascent, weeping loudly and entirely refusing to proceed. At intervals they halted and ate yellow squares of tough bread and dried plums, the yaks throughout panting and gnashing their teeth instead of emitting their usual single grunt of content. Near the crest of the pass the track lay among rocks and crags, and I took my feet out of the stirrups and pressed them into my mount's neck; for yaks have an unpleasant habit of brushing close to any obstacle on the path, and, owing to this, our baggage always suffered considerably. I was riding behind a Kirghiz pony that had been led in front of our party all the way, when suddenly this animal lost its footing and tumbled back right on to my mount, dragging its

master along with it. If I had been on horseback we could not have avoided an accident, but luckily yaks appear to have no nerves, and mine stood firm and bore the shock right nobly.

Certainly it was a relief to reach the level ground at the top of the pass, and to dismount while the Kirghiz knelt in prayer before a big cairn of stones crowned with rag-laden sticks. I looked back to enjoy the view of the immense glacier that filled the valley and the peaks towering far above us; but suddenly I had a splitting headache combined with nausea and faintness, which made me realize that I must be experiencing a touch of the mountain-sickness of which I had often read. I felt that I should soon recover if I could only leave the height on which we were standing, and a sturdy native assisted me down the steep track of shifting shale until my brother called to him to halt, thinking I might faint outright. Hot tea was produced from our thermos bottles, and after lying flat for a short time I revived, and enquired of Iftikhar Ahmad, who was also supported by a servant down the mountain-side, whether he, too, were suffering from *mal de montagne*? He explained that he was merely recovering from the effects of an opiate that he had taken to avoid the malady; but it seemed to me that the remedy was almost worse than the illness.

Although we were over the pass proper, our troubles were not yet at an end, for we had now to ride for a couple of hours along very steep and narrow tracks, where a false step of our ponies on the shifting shingle would have hurled us into the yellow water of the river roaring below, and so into the next world. At last a breakneck descent brought us to the bank of this

river. We forded it and reached a group of *akhois*, where we halted for the night and enquired into casualties. Daoud and one of our grooms were quite lame; the chestnut had fallen and strained itself, and all the animals were badly in need of a rest after their exhausting experiences.

Consequently, next day's march was a short one, but disagreeable; for the track lay along the stony bed of one of the dried-up watercourses that are so common throughout Chinese Turkestan. The valley widened out and the air became milder and milder as we descended, until we reached the first trees that we had seen for weeks. Willows, firs and poplars clung to the hillsides, rising from patches of abundant scrub, tamarisk with pink flower spikes, berberis with scarlet and orange berries and aromatic juniper; wild roses were in bloom, and the swallow and a brown bird with crimson under-wings flew and twittered.

Our baggage yaks were now discarded for camels, and when our caravan reached camp I was distressed by the lugubrious cries of a she-camel that resounded through the night. I found that her young one had been unable to keep up on the march and had accordingly been left on the road in the care of some Kirghiz, but would be rejoined by its disconsolate mother on her return. Female camels are greatly attached to their young, and I was told that, if deprived of them, they mourn and lament for at least three months, so that the general idea of the camel as an impassive and callous animal is quite wrong.

At the end of July we finally left the hills and rode some thirty miles into the plain to Opal, our last halt before we reached Kashgar. The march began

down stony river-beds, valleys that widened out, and hills that became lower and lower until on our left they vanished altogether, while to our right they terminated in a bold cliff that rose sheer from a great plain shimmering with light. Silver streaks meandering across this plain indicated rivers, and beyond it we saw again the snowy crests of the Celestial mountains, and the picturesquely serrated peaks behind Miniol, while low hills, beautiful in pink and amber, ochre and mauve, made a fairy vision in the early morning light.

Luckily for us, the weather was cloudy and inclined to rain, as otherwise our sudden descent into the summer heat would have been somewhat trying. At Opal we were in the midst of trees and irrigation, and it was delightful to see golden wheat and barley ripe for the sickle, waving crops of maize and millet, fields of linseed in bloom, cotton in flower, and one of the six annual crops of lucerne in sheets of vivid green.

Next day we were at Kashgar, and, much though I had enjoyed my late experiences, the comfort and cleanliness of the Consulate appealed strongly to us both, as did also the abundance of tomatoes, cauliflowers, cabbages, egg-plants, cucumbers, pumpkins and carrots in its well-stocked garden. We had returned to a season of plenty; for, although the apricots and the first crop of figs were over, the melons were at their prime, white, yellow, green and pink-fleshed, while the small peaches and nectarines were ripe, to be followed by a larger variety later, and the splendid grapes of many kinds and flavours were almost ready. To the servants it could not have been so pleasant, since we arrived in the middle

KASHGAR MUSICIANS.

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of the great fast of Ramazan, half of which they had escaped owing to being on a journey. During the following fortnight they were very slack and tired, and, though we spared them as much as we could, I felt ashamed to eat three good meals a day while they might touch nothing, Daoud having to prepare our food, and Sattur having to see us eat it. Certainly it is more trying in the hot weather than in the cold of winter, but at any time of year it is not a light matter to let no food pass the lips between dawn and sunset for a whole lunar month. On the stretch of melon beds that lay below our terraced garden the owners had built shelters of leafy boughs and sang and played the whole night through, the noise of drums, pipes and bagpipes not being particularly conducive to our slumbers. The flies had become a nuisance, though I did my best to cope with them by making the doors and windows of the kitchen and larder practically fly-proof, and I found that carbolic sprinkled on a hot shovel stupefied the insects with its pungent smoke, so that they could be swept up. But, as might have been foreseen, nothing I could do was really efficacious, owing to the *vis inertiae* of the Oriental, and to his inherent incapacity to shut doors properly.

We found a temperature of 98 degrees somewhat trying at first after the uplands we had left, but we enjoyed some pleasant rides to gardens outside the city, where we drank tea and ate fruit, and were offered trays of pistachios. The shell of these nuts is usually split at one end, and Mr. Bohlin quoted a Turki saying to the effect that "a smiling man is like an open pistachio." In every garden there was a mud platform

covered with felts or carpets, on which the natives lie, and sometimes, instead of this, a large oblong wooden table with very short legs. On these expeditions, Sattur followed in the carriage carrying our tea, and we heard that the townsfolk thought we must esteem him very highly to allow him to drive in state while we merely rode.

The crops of Indian corn were usually of the variety with big heads and no "cobs," our informant saying that both children and dogs steal and eat the milky cobs to such an extent that it was hardly worth while to grow them. This is the last crop to be reaped, and there is an anecdote describing how one year the devil entered into a compact with a farmer who was to give His Satanic Majesty everything *above* ground. The wily cultivator then sowed carrots, and the disappointed devil accordingly stipulated that his share during the second year should be everything *below* ground; whereupon wheat was sown. Upon this, Satan demanded at the beginning of the third year that the *top* and *root* of the crops sown should be his. But the farmer again outwitted him by raising Indian corn and taking all the cobs, which grow partway down the plants.

All along the roads, mixing with the lofty *durra* plants, were the fan-like hemp leaves which emitted a strong odour. The Chinese forbid the cultivation of this plant, for *hashish* has worse effects upon its victims than opium; but the Kashgaris appear to pay little heed to the prohibition and prepare the deadly drug from the pollen which falls from the flowers upon the leaves. Much flax is grown, but only for the oil which is obtained from the seeds, and the natives were amazed, and even disbelieving,

when Mr. Bohlin showed them linen made from its fibre. The oil is squeezed out by means of a wheel turned by a horse in a very narrow space, and when the poor animal gets dizzy, going round and round, it is blindfolded, and in the end it often goes blind in reality. On one occasion an intelligent Armenian brought a machine to Kashgar to extract the oil, but the *mullas* said it was unclean, and as no one dared to buy the oil the man was ruined. The *mullas* act more or less as guardians of order. We were told that during the summer there had been a fight about irrigation water —a most fruitful cause of dissension in the East— with the result that several of the townsfolk had been wounded. The priests, anxious to prevent the recurrence of such a scandal, had visited every house in the city and broken the *points* of all the knives, a somewhat original way of checking quarrels.

After being among the lusty, ruddy Kirghiz, the Kashgaris seemed to us pale and underfed, and I was not surprised to hear that any illness carries them off very quickly. Of course they were all suffering from the effects of Ramazan, but their usual food, a thin broth mixed with flour and piles of boiled macaroni, cannot be very sustaining. It was a great relief to me when August 12 arrived, and the fast was over and all our staff attended a service in the little mosque attached to the Consulate. Poor Jafar Bai looked very old and worn out, and told me that the torture of being unable to quench his thirst had been terrible. He and the other servants came to salaam us clad in new, or at all events clean, clothes, and to show their joy they beat a little hand-drum during the entire day. The townsfolk in

their new dresses were a feast of colour for the eyes, and I remember one pretty little girl in yellow silk with a crimson skull-cap worked in gold, while another in a long magenta and green-patterned cotton held a big melon in each hand and gazed at us under a jaunty green cap. Many were fond of combining magenta and scarlet, which looked quite in place among the green trees and crops, and their love of colour greatly added to the charm of our daily rides.

Here are the words of one of the songs sung by children during the month of Ramazan, which was translated for me, its charming tune having haunted me. The chorus, however, struck me as somewhat ironical, for the yearly fast presses with great severity on the poor, who are forced to work for their livelihood, and cannot sleep all day and eat all night as do the rich.

1

These thirty fasts are our guests,
Those who do not keep the fast are animals.

Chorus.

Ramazan, the good month of Ramazan!
Holy and welcome Ramazan is the King of Months!

2

I come to your door singing praises of Ramazan,
May God in His mercy grant you a son to adorn your cradle
Chorus, etc.

3

I shall not weary of singing the praises of Ramazan,
Nor will I leave until you have given me seven cakes of bread.
Chorus, etc.

4

On the tenth night of Ramazan Fate casts the lot of all men,
Therefore omit not to give alms to the poor on the eve of Destiny.
Chorus, etc.

CHAPTER IX

THE ANCIENT CITY OF YARKAND

The Turki have long-shaped faces, well-formed noses and full beards. . . .

These facts show that the modern Yarkandees are not pure Tartars like the Kirghiz . . . but rather Tartarized Aryans, if I may so express myself.—ROBERT SHAW, *Visits to High Tartary, Yarkand and Kashgar.*

IT was the beginning of September when we set off on the tour which had Khotan as its goal and which was in reality a passing from oasis to oasis along the edge of the Takla Makan Desert. This sahara may be regarded as the western extension of the immense waste of the Gobi that stretches for more than a thousand miles to the east, a very abomination of desolation.

Golden autumn was on the land as we rode out of Kashgar along the broad tree-shaded road that leads to the New City, and turned off after a couple of miles to cross the imposing-looking Kalmuck bridge. Along the river bank the rice was being cut and then threshed by means of a stone roller, which bullocks and donkeys were pulling round and round over the heaped-up ears, the handsome millet crop was turning yellow, the big leaves of melons, pumpkins and gourds were withering, and only the lucerne kept its vivid green.

Jafar Bai and Humayun rode behind us, Iftikhar

Ahmad and the Doctor were escorted by their own attendants, and Sattur, with the lunch and tea-box kept up with us fairly well in a blue-tilted *mapa*. Our tents and baggage were packed into covered carts termed *arabas*, drawn by three, and later on by five, ponies apiece, Daoud finding a seat in one of them. These waggons have very high wheels, with only one horse between the shafts, the others being harnessed in front, pulling at the side. The drivers shouted "Oo—ah! Oo—ah!" to their horses all the time, but I noticed that riders called out "Choo! Choo!" to stimulate their mounts, and without that magic exclamation I should never have got my pony along, as the whip made no impression upon him. The donkeys in this part of the world were urged by a peculiar sound reminding me of one of the symptoms of *mal de mer*, while a series of sharp whistles answered the same purpose with the sheep and goats.

In the East, travellers like to attach themselves to the caravan of any one of position, partly for the sake of protection and partly for the prestige which it gives them among the natives. As highway robbery is practically unknown in Chinese Turkestan the men that joined us did so for the latter reason, and among them the Master of the Horse of the Rajah of Punyal and his groom were picturesque figures, always riding as if they were showing off the points of their wiry ponies to would-be purchasers. They were in search of a couple of Badakshani stallions for their chief, and throughout the entire journey their eyes were riveted on the handsome grey and the chestnut that my brother and I rode. At each town where we halted they searched for horses,

OUR *TRAIN* ON THE YARKAND ROAD.

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even making a purchase once or twice, which they sent back as unsuitable before the expiration of the three days during which either side has the right to break a bargain. They were unsuccessful in their quest, so that when we returned to Kashgar they purchased our Badakshanis, and we felt glad to know that the animals that had carried us so well and had given us so much pleasure were in the hands of horse-lovers, whose methods were far more enlightened than those of the Kashgaris.

Another interesting personality was the Chief Falconer of the Mehtar of Chitral, who was engaged in a search for a pair of white hawks. These birds, which are extremely rare, if indeed they exist as a species, are said to be found in the district of Ili; but our fellow-traveller, having heard that one had been offered for sale at Kashgar and another at Khotan, determined to throw in his lot with us, as we were bound for the latter city. Truth to say, he was a timid man, entirely devoid of the love of adventure that is part of the equipment of the true traveller, and moreover he had no knowledge of the Turki language. He found no white hawk in Kashgar and probably expected none in Khotan, but I fancy he joined our caravan to pick up the language and so fit himself more or less for the still longer journey to Ili.

When we were at Tashkurghan during our visit to the Pamirs, we heard that a pair of white falcons had been procured in the valley for presentation to the Agha Khan. Unluckily one of the birds died, but the Sarikolis, not to be foiled, stuffed it and offered it to the Head of their faith together with its live mate.

This admiration for white falcons is old, and in

the annals of the crusades it is mentioned that Philip of France owned a white falcon to which he was greatly attached. According to the chronicle, "Le roi aimait beaucoup cet oiseau, et l'oiseau aimait le roi de même." But one day it made a long flight and came down among the Saracens, who refused to give it up until Philip had paid a huge ransom for its recovery.

Another addition to our party was a Hindu trader with a wooden leg, who had a few words of English at his command, saluted us in military fashion, and excited my admiration at the agility with which he mounted and dismounted from his horse. If Chaucer could have come to life again, he would have delighted in our caravan, composed of such diverse elements, and I never tired of observing the many gradations it contained between the Aryan and Mongol races. For example, one youth from Gilgit had the features and limbs of the immortal riders of the Elgin marbles and bestrode a big grey with the same effortless mastery, carrying my mind back to Alexander and his Greek colonies in Asia.

Our first real halt was the town of Yangi Hissar, which is practically a continuation of the Kashgar Oasis, the cultivation being merely broken at intervals by bands of salt desert and narrow stretches of sand-dunes. The inhabitants worked the land up to the edge of the sand, and in many cases had placed their mud-built hamlets so close to the dunes that they were in danger of being overwhelmed, should a violent sandstorm occur. The whole of our route was marked by *potais*, these Chinese equivalents of milestones being erected two and a quarter miles apart. They are built of mud bricks, in form not unlike

the castles used in chess and some fifteen feet in height. Whenever the *potai* stood near a rest-house or at the entrance of a town it was attended by five miniature *potais*, reminding me of a hen and its chickens, a device employed to show the traveller that rest and refreshment were close at hand. It impressed me to know that these "milestones" not only marked the road to Khotan, but the entire distance to Peking, a journey that would take six months to accomplish. The Forsyth Mission speak of tall wooden mile-posts as marking this road, placed about five miles apart, *i.e.* a *farsang* or one hour's journey, the same word being used as in Persia.

The autumnal weather was very pleasant, as the nights and early mornings were refreshingly cool, and we made, wherever possible, a long mid-day halt. As we rose at 5 A.M. I was quite ready to rest from twelve to three, and had a head-net wherewith to circumvent the flies during the lazy hours spent beside irrigation channels bordered by willows, where the peasants made us gifts of melons, peaches, nectarines and grapes, the last sometimes an inch and a half long and deliciously flavoured. Lemons were unobtainable, but we found that grape-juice mixed with water made a refreshing drink. The cultivators were always most polite, and when paid for their offerings smiled and said, "Allah is gracious."

Throughout the tour I practically lived on fruit, and I suppose there is nothing more refreshing in hot weather than slices of the splendid melons that I considered superior in taste to those I had so often enjoyed in Persia. Perhaps the *taus* or "peacock" —as the natives call the great dark-green water melon with black and white seeds set in its scarlet flesh—

quenches thirst the best, but it has not the "bouquet" of the *karbuzeh* proper, and wherever we went the peasants were devouring huge chunks of this fruit, which they prefer to all others. Thousands of melons were being prepared for winter storage, the method adopted being to lay them in the sun for a month, turning them over frequently, and then to place them on sand in cold rooms. The natives eat them throughout the winter and until the fresh fruit comes round again, though we did not appreciate them much when we sampled a last year's specimen on our arrival at Kashgar in April.

Yangi Hissar is a small town surrounded by a high wall and is a centre of gardens and cultivation, the river on which it stands flowing through a deep gorge in the loess, which is broken up into picturesque cliffs. From the city we enjoyed superb views of the snowy Muztagh Ata range. We camped in a so-called garden that was really an orchard of fruit trees planted along irrigation channels, in the middle of which, on a large concrete platform, was a *shefang*, or Chinese garden-house. It was square and had a prettily painted wooden roof, the open sides being partly curtained in. Throughout the tour in all our halts we usually left the house proper to the servants and lived in the *shefang* all day, sleeping in our tents at night. One drawback to these gardens was the myriads of mosquitoes brought by the water; but as we slept under our nets we avoided the malaria that had attacked the Swedish missionaries, who have a neat compound at Yangi Hissar: I was also always on the look-out for scorpions after I had found one in my tent nestling on the collar of my tweed coat.

We halted at Yangi Hissar only for a day to rest

our caravan, but my brother borrowed fresh horses in order to visit the shrine of Agri Su, some eight miles to the south-west. A gloomy group of old poplars, that reminded him of the sacred groves outside Greek temples, lay at the foot of a steep cliff, in which steps were cut to enable pilgrims to ascend to the small domed shrine in honour of *Shaykh* Ata-ul Vali and his son Kasim. The object of my brother's visit was to see a certain inscribed stone some three and a half feet in diameter which the inhabitants greatly venerated; but he could not decipher the inscription, and after photographing the stone and visiting the site of an ancient city which the inhabitants called by the lengthy name of Jam-i-Taghai-Agri-Su he returned to camp.

Next day we traversed a vast marshy plain covered with dried-up reeds, on which, to my surprise, herds of lean cattle were browsing. The glorious mountains were hidden by a veil of dust, and when we reached our camp on the edge of the Yarkand Oasis thunder rolled, lightning flashed, and the sand whirled up in clouds, half-blinding us until our servants managed to pitch our tents. Then the rain came down in sheets, practically the first that we had experienced since we reached Kashgar in April; for on the Pamirs we had had only snow or heavy passing showers. It cleared the air and revealed the mountains, which looked magnificent as we rode across the gravelly desert, now and again coming upon a rest-house built by Yakub Beg. At one of these a party of Hindus, British subjects from Yarkand, entertained us with tea, eggs, sweetmeats and fruit; but we did not dare to halt long, as they said that another storm was imminent.

Our camp that night was pitched among trees, and some men brought a big horned owl to show us, a beautiful creature, buff with dark markings, and held by a string tied to its leg. My brother gave its captors money to release it, and I rejoiced to see it flap its great wings and sail off to the shelter of a tall Turkestan elm, where I trusted that it would rest in security.

We often saw the great golden eagles which are trained to hunting in this part of the world. They kill gazelles, hares and foxes, and I always wondered how their masters could ride at breakneck pace and mount and dismount while carrying such a weight on their arms. The great birds seemed wonderfully docile, and apparently indifferent as to whether their hoods were on or off. The hunting eagle is captured by means of a live fox tied to a rope; the bird, busily employed in tearing its prey, does not observe that the quarry is being drawn by the rope gradually nearer and nearer to a hole, in which the hunter lies concealed with a net to throw over the eagle. When captured the unfortunate bird is confined in a dark room, its eyelids are sewn up, and its spirit is broken by the incessant beating of drums which allows it no sleep. It remains morose for a time, refusing all food, but gradually becomes tame and attaches itself to the man who feeds it and takes it out hunting.

The British Consul-General is always welcomed throughout Chinese Turkestan, and I will give a description of our entry into Yarkand, which will serve as an example of what occurred at every town during our tour. Some miles from the city we were met at intervals by groups of British subjects, mostly

A HUNTING EAGLE.

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Hindus, who dismounted to greet my brother and then rode behind us, our escort thus becoming bigger and bigger as we proceeded. Some of its members were but indifferent horsemen. Now and again a rider would be thrown and his steed gallop off, or a horse tethered by the roadside would break loose, agitating the procession and making my chestnut scream with excitement until the runaways were captured, usually by the men from Punyal.

Old Jafar Bai had a reception all to himself. Though he lived at Kashgar and owned shops there, he told me that the chief part of his property was at Yarkand, acquired in the old days when he owned a caravan and carried goods between the two towns. I was interested to note the number of acquaintances who clasped his hands warmly, and, when we stopped to partake of the usual spread of fowls, eggs and tea laid out in a marquee, the old man had the joy of seeing his small grandson brought to him by his son-in-law. He kissed the child passionately, and then, full of pride, brought it to me and smiled as I gave the little fellow sweets and biscuits.

After this the whole company remounted and swept on again, to be stopped nearer to the city by the Russian Agent accompanied by the Russian subjects, who were standing in a large group beside tables laden with food, to which our servants always did full justice, surprised that their employers did not appreciate these incessant meals. Just outside Yarkand the beating of drums, the squealing of pipes and the scraping of *tars*, producing music most excruciating to European ears, announced the Chinese reception. As I always avoided this ceremony, I

was glad to be met by Dr. Hoegberg, head of the Swedish Missions and incidentally the architect of the Kashgar Consulate, who drove me along the broad tree-bordered road to the new Chinese town and through interminable bazars to the pleasant garden-house of the British Agent.

"The people of Yarkand display an entire lack of energy and enterprise, or indeed of any interest in life," was the dictum of Lieutenant Etherton, who visited the city in 1909. Though I thought the statement somewhat sweeping at first, I soon noticed how apathetic the Yarkandis were when contrasted with the lively, laughing Kashgaris, and the reason was not far to seek. The inhabitants of this district are afflicted with goitre in its most distressing forms; and the Swedish doctor told us he believed that about fifty per cent of the population were victims of the complaint, which in his opinion was not the same as the European goitre, and for which he knew of no remedy save iodine. One theory is that it is due to the habit of drinking stagnant water stored in tanks, the river unfortunately being at some distance from the city; but the peasantry living right out in the country are by no means exempt from the scourge. Many thus affected become idiots, and the children of goitrous parents inherit the disease, which Marco Polo commented on in the following words: "A large proportion of them have swollen legs and great crops at the throat, which arises from some quality in their drinking-water." The old Chinese travellers also make mention of the complaint, but I heard that the Celestials, who boil all their water, whether used for drinking or for washing, never fall victims to it, nor apparently do the Hindu traders or travellers, although

if they marry Yarkandi women their children may develop it. Some say that all who drink from a certain canal are sure to contract the disease, while others affirm that it is caused by the grey water of the Yarkand River. Be that as it may, the health of half the population is undermined, and the aged and children alike are sufferers, some unfortunates having their heads permanently tilted backwards by the horrible swelling in their throats. This has given rise to the popular anecdote of the man who rode his horse to the water but had to ask a neighbour if the animal were drinking, as he could not himself look down to see.

Besides goitre and skin-diseases induced by lack of washing, opium and hashish-smoking, and the squalor in which they live, contribute to the sickly look of the people, and I decided that dirty, dusty ruinous old Yarkand was a good place to live out of. The mosques and shrines were in a state of dilapidation, and in spite of a large body of Hindus, who trade with India by one of the highest routes in the world, the whole place looked much poorer than Kashgar.

Masses of snowy-white cotton were to be seen everywhere in the bazars, ready for the stuffing of cushions and quilts or to be spun into yarn, while at odd corners we came across groups of children busily removing the pods or beating out the seeds with sticks. Here, as at Kashgar, there is no grazing for the sheep ; hence the poor quality and the toughness of the mutton. The animals were trying to get some nourishment from the withered cotton bents, and I sometimes saw a woman holding out bunches of lucerne to her half-starved charges or letting them

munch dried maize leaves from a basket. One must ride in single file through the narrow alleys of the bazar, which are covered in with awnings of maize leaves to keep off the heat. Children and chickens get in the way; here a goat is tied up or a camel is lying down in the midst of the traffic; there a horse, tethered by a rope to a stall, lashes out with its heels at passing riders, and now and again one gets glimpses of extremely unsavoury courtyards. But in fairness to the inhabitants of Chinese Turkestan I defy any one to keep clean who has to live in a house of unbaked mud where there are no washing arrangements, and where, in the absence of chairs, every one must sit on the mud floor; fortunately the brilliantly coloured flowered prints do not show the prevailing dirt as much as might be expected.

The best shops in the bazar were near the Hindu serai, that was hung with silks in honour of my brother's visit, and I was told that the Chinese are so considerate to the traders from India that they forbid the opening of any butchers' shops near their quarters, and orders to this effect, inscribed on boards and stuck up on walls, were pointed out to me. Sometimes the Yarkandis tear down these notices and the butchers reopen their stalls, but whenever this occurs a complaint from the Hindus to the authorities is ultimately successful. This praiseworthy tolerance of the religious views of other races partly accounts for the easy Chinese mastery over a Mohamedan population.

Quantities of beautiful fruit, such as peaches and grapes, were on sale in the bazars, the vendors keeping off the swarms of flies by means of horse-hair flappers, and naked children were munching enormous chunks

of melon. Horses were being shod, horse-shoes hammered out on the anvils, and near by picturesque copper pots were being worked into shape, a noisy operation. At intervals we came across a mosque with the columned verandah so characteristic of the province, its beams and pediments covered with incised carving something in the style of Jacobean work. The principal mosque had lost about half the blue and white tiles that had once adorned its façade, and the city wall was out of repair to such an extent that people could enter the town by many a breach after the crazy-looking wooden doors had been closed at sunset.

Among the callers on my brother was the son of the *Thum* of Hunza, whose defeat by the British in 1891 is so graphically described in Knight's book *Where Three Empires Meet.* The young chief, who was a child at that time, now ekes out a penurious existence on a small estate given to his ancestors by the Chinese, and has a pension of a couple of *taels* a month, a sum equivalent to 4s. 8d. Safdar Ali Khan, the old *Thum,* after his defeat fled to Kucha, where he still lives with an ancient retainer or two, and earns a humble livelihood as a market-gardener. *Sic transit !*

During our stay I had the pleasure of entertaining a Yarkandi lady. She arrived accompanied by her mother and three sons, and was clad in a purple satin coat, while across her forehead was a richly embroidered head-band, over which fell in graceful folds her long white muslin shawl. When she had removed her lace-work veil her pretty face was set off by big gold earrings and her long black plaits reached half-way down her back. I

photographed both ladies, together with the small boys, who were attired in velvet. Going next day to return their visit, I found myself in a garden that had formerly belonged to Yakub Beg, where the mud platform on which he was wont to perform his devotions was pointed out to me. On this occasion I gained a little insight into native etiquette; for my hostess, after graciously accepting a small gift which I presented, put it aside and did not open the parcel until I had retired, it being considered bad manners to look at and admire a present in the way that Europeans are accustomed to do. Our conversation happening to turn on scorpions, my hostess said that she had suffered agonies for three days after having been stung by one, and her husband related that the followers of a certain Indian saint have the power of taking away the pain of a scorpion sting by breathing on the afflicted part. Though he had not had personal experience of this, he had met many who swore that they had been cured instantly by this means, which was perhaps akin to hypnotism. On our return to Yarkand some three weeks later I was invited to attend the feast of the "shaving of the head" of my host's youngest son, but having no interpreter, as men were tabooed, I declined, though I much regretted missing the sight of some forty or fifty ladies attired in their best and adorned with much jewellery.

While at Yarkand we visited the little colony of boys and girls who were being trained by the Swedish missionaries in their large compound. These children were taught to read and write in Turki, to weave and to sew. The girls cooked all the food, made the bread

and did the housework, wearing aprons over their gowns of pretty Russian print. The boys were dressed in clothes of their own weaving, and Mrs. Hoegberg hoped that the girls might later on marry the boys, who were being trained to be self-supporting. In any case she trusted that they might lead happier lives than usually befall the maidens of Chinese Turkestan, who are practically sold by their parents and are often handed over to old men. It is true that the husband engages to pay a certain sum for the maintenance of his wife should he divorce her, and this he does in the presence of witnesses. But the onus of finding these witnesses and bringing them up before the *Imam* lies on the woman, and the man can often persuade them to swear that he promised to pay his wife much less than he really did. The parents of a wealthy woman can help her to obtain her rights, but a poor woman may have a hard fight for bare existence before she can find a new husband to support her.

Village life is better for the women than life in the town, for they have fewer matrimonial adventures, and there are none of the temporary marriages that are common in all the centres of population. I noticed that they veiled far less in Yarkand than in Kashgar, the result of stronger Chinese influence; but here and throughout the province they were not permitted to enter the little village mosques that are such a characteristic feature of the country. These places of worship are usually built by some pious benefactor, who gives a piece of land for an endowment fund. This is called a *wakf* or "trust," and the trustees appoint a *mulla*, who is often a villager with a good voice who merely calls the Faithful to prayer.

Dr. and Mrs. Hoegberg had done missionary work in Persia, and said that they found the Turki very slow-witted and disinclined to discuss religion, a strong contrast in this respect to the keen-brained, argumentative Persians, who enjoy nothing more than metaphysics, and, being Shias, are less orthodox and priest-ridden than the primitive Sunnis of Chinese Turkestan.

Whether Christianity is gaining a hold in Chinese Turkestan or not, the high standard which it sets up is not without its influence, as the following anecdote told me by Dr. Hoegberg shows. A Yarkandi merchant went with some traders to buy figs, and on the way his friends jeered at him on account of his leanings towards Christianity. When they reached the market they were offered the fruit packed in baskets said to contain a hundred, but the buyers never dreamt of trusting the word of the vendor, and counted the contents of the baskets, finding several figs short in each. The merchant then enquired of his colleagues whether, when they bought calico or print that had come from Europe, they found any deficiency in the number of yards that were stamped upon each piece. "Never," they answered in chorus, and he then pointed out that this honesty was due to Christian principles of fair-dealing.

CHAPTER X

THROUGH THE DESERT TO KHOTAN

. . . The view was boundless, there were no traces either of man or horse, and in the night the demons and goblins raised fire-lights as many as the stars; in the day time the driving wind blew the sand before it. . . .—*Travels of Hiuen Tsiang.*

YARKAND is the richest oasis in Chinese Turkestan, but we did not appreciate this fact until we had left the city and saw the open country covered with wide stretches of rice, maize, wheat and millet; and I confess that I had to revise my opinion as to the lethargy of the Yarkandis, or at all events of the peasantry, when I realized the ceaseless labour required to produce such abundance.

The Yarkand River, the source of which had recently been fixed by the Filippi expedition, was about six miles from the town, and we crossed it in broad ferry-boats like punts, which were some forty feet long. We clambered over a barrier at one end of the boat, and our nine horses, stepping in nimbly behind us, one after the other, without any fuss, were packed in tightly, close up to the plank that separated us from them. Sattur's *mapa* was fixed into a second boat with some difficulty as it was too broad, but finally all our belongings were settled, and two muscular men—one handling a long

pole and the other a paddle—took us across the river, which is dangerous on account of its shifting quicksands. Our horses seemed to enjoy the novel experience, some of them craning over to drink as we slowly approached the opposite bank. There I anticipated some trouble, as the animals had to turn round and step out at the end by which they entered. However, they grasped the situation at once, and very soon we were mounted, fording a couple of shallow branches of the main stream and stumbling over a dreary waste of rounded boulders which formed an old river bed. Beyond this lay trees and villages and a band of British subjects ready to welcome us with the inevitable tea, fruit and sweetmeats; an attention that I did not appreciate, as several of our hosts were afflicted with goitre in its most distressing forms.

At Posgam, where we halted for the night, quarters were assigned to us in a garden that boasted a magnificent walnut-tree, and we had our beds placed on platforms outside the attractive garden-house, where my room, carpeted with crudely coloured products of the loom, had fretted woodwork windows.

Next day our twenty-four mile march led us entirely through cultivation, along a broad highway bordered with willows, the rice fields stretching for many acres on either side. The River Tiznaf flowed clear over a stony bed, in pleasing contrast to the muddy streams we had encountered hitherto, and we were told that those drinking from it never suffered from goitre.

In this part of the world it is customary for the villages to open their bazars on different days and to name them accordingly. At the *Panjshamba*, or

FERRY ON THE YARKAND RIVER.

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Thursday market, every kind of article is offered for sale, because the bazars are all closed on *Juma* (Friday), the day on which the Faithful visit the mosques, and I was told that at Khotan the *Chahar-shamba* (Wednesday) bazar is held only for the sale of milk products.

We met crowds of people coming to the Posgam market. There were beggars galore, whole families of them, sometimes accompanied by big dogs; and tramping along to gain their livelihood were the religious mendicants, who were striking figures clad in rags of many colours, wearing sugar-loaf hats and carrying bowls and stout sticks, or sometimes gourds and rattles. They evidently aimed at the picturesque in their appearance, and their outward dirt was a sign of inward holiness and conferred on them the power to drive away demons and heal diseases. Farther on we came across musicians carrying *tars*, some having instruments resembling zithers and others drums and pipes, while parties of Chinese laden with gambling tables struck a sinister note. The crowd was largely composed of women of the peasant class mounted on ponies or donkeys and driving their cattle and sheep to market, some clasping fowls in their arms. Two or three wore a curious globular hat of cloth of silver, the like of which I saw only once at Kashgar, when I was told that it was the headgear of a bride. All the world seemed bound for Posgam. and as we passed through village after village on our way to Kargalik hardly any one was to be seen, and the little stalls under the vine-covered trellises that roofed in the bazars were shuttered up or bare, with the exception of the bread stalls. The boxes of flowers on the roofs gave touches of light

and colour in the form of asters, balsams and marigolds, while here and there masses of golden maize were drying in the sun.

On this occasion the Hindus had provided for us a refection of chops and poached eggs, evidently considering this food more suitable for a Sahib than the usual fowls, and when we had coped with this I left my brother to enjoy the reception given by the Russian subjects, and, attended by Jafar Bai, rode on to our quarters, passing the Chinese *Amban* on his way to greet the British Consul-General. This dignitary, with a most impassive face, drove in an elaborately painted *mapa*, preceded by a youth carrying a huge magenta silk umbrella with a deep fringe, while his escort of soldiers, in quaint black uniforms, were carrying mediaeval-looking spears and halberds.

The house prepared for us stood in a little garden crammed with vegetables and with enormous specimens of the misshapen and velvety crimson coxcomb. An outside staircase led to a balcony that ran round a large upper room with heavily barred wooden windows, which was the ladies' abode—a very depressing one to my mind, as it remained in perpetual twilight, and from it no glimpse could be obtained of the outside world, though its smells and noises were extremely obvious. But, as I slept on the balcony, it served me for a convenient dressing-room, as well as for a retreat when my brother held the usual receptions of British subjects and Chinese officials in the house below.

About this time all the horses seemed to become lame at once. The Badakshani chestnut and the grey both took to limping, and the nice little pony

on which I rode astride cut its fetlock badly. Kalmuck, our last purchase, though sound, was an exasperatingly sluggish horse and consequently very fatiguing to ride. Jafar Bai, as usual, persisted that the lameness was due to my brother's order to water the horses after they had been about an hour in camp, and was in no way convinced when it was proved that bad shoeing had lamed one animal, and when the others gradually recovered in spite of adherence to the English rules as to forage and watering.

We were now to have our first sight of the real desert, which lay between us and the Khotan Oasis. On the night before our march across it we rested in a tiny village on its very edge, some of the mud-built houses being half-buried by the sand and others having trenches dug round them to keep it off. An irrigation channel ran between willows, with patches of cultivation on either side. We put up as best we could in the courtyard of a serai, the building itself being too crowded with peasants to accommodate us. Owing to the reluctance which all Orientals feel to leaving a town, the drivers of the *arabas*, in spite of their being drawn by five horses apiece, arrived so late that our supper, eaten by the light of the moon, was extremely scanty.

When we rose in the morning the desert stretched before us vast and undulating. In Canada in the early spring the prairie, reaching to the far horizon on either side of the train, had reminded me of a desert, so limitless, so barren and devoid of life did the largest wheat field in the world appear. But oh, the difference! The Takla Makan kills all life unless there is water to correct its baleful influence,

while the prairie holds in its bosom food for millions.

As we rode on our way at six o'clock the early morning wind was swirling up the sand, obscuring the sky and magnifying everything strangely. At intervals the *potais*, most of which were in a ruinous condition, loomed monstrous through the haze, a caravan that I imagined to be composed of camels resolved itself into a group of diminutive donkeys, while a gigantic figure draped in fluttering robes turned into a harmless peasant carrying a staff and water-gourd. We followed the broad track made by *arabas* and the hoofs of countless animals; but I thought how easy it would be to lose the way, were a strong wind to blow the sand across our route and cover the skulls and other traces of bygone caravans. In the days of Hiuen Tsiang and Marco Polo there were no *potais*, and travellers must often have been lost; indeed the Chinese pilgrim tells us that when he crossed this desert the heaps of bones were his only means of knowing whether he was following the right track or not. I was interested to hear that this particular stage had the reputation of being haunted and that no peasant would traverse it alone at night. In fact, a Hindu trader told Iftikhar Ahmad that he and his servants had been greatly terrified a few days before our arrival. They were travelling after dark and, though there was no moon, a sudden light in the sky revealed a broad road bordered by irrigation channels and trees, along which marched an army. The onlookers imagined from their uniforms that the soldiers were Turks, but they could not see their faces, and suddenly they vanished, only to give place to droves of cattle

and sheep, which seemed to pour in an unending stream past the frightened travellers. In the life of Hiuen Tsiang mention is made more than once of the hallucinations to which he was subject in the desert, and the following passage occurs: "He saw a body of troops amounting to several hundreds covering the sandy plain—the soldiers were clad in fur and felt. And now the appearance of camels and horses and the fluttering of standards and lances met his view. . . ." I quote this passage because the Chinaman's vision in the seventh century seems strangely akin to that of the Hindu and his servants.

As we neared the large oasis of Guma the inevitable receptions began several miles out in the desert, and I was struck with the appearance of our host, the *Aksakal*. He was a tall, handsome man, remarkably like a high-class Persian, and wore a long mauve coat with a magenta waistband, and a purple felt hat with broad gold band, a purchase from India. He installed us in his newly built house, which, being in the middle of the bazar, was the haunt of legions of flies. It consisted of several small rooms opening on to a little courtyard planted with shrubs and flowers, over which lovely humming-bird moths were hovering; but, as there was no exit at the back and we were at very close quarters with our servants, I did not altogether appreciate what was evidently the *ne plus ultra* of Guma taste. Our rooms and the verandah were painted in pink and mauve, the window frames bright green with their shutters picked out in blue and brown, while above the window of the principal room was a richly coloured and gilded floral design. The entrance door, draped with green plush, cloth of gold and silver and a piece of purple and

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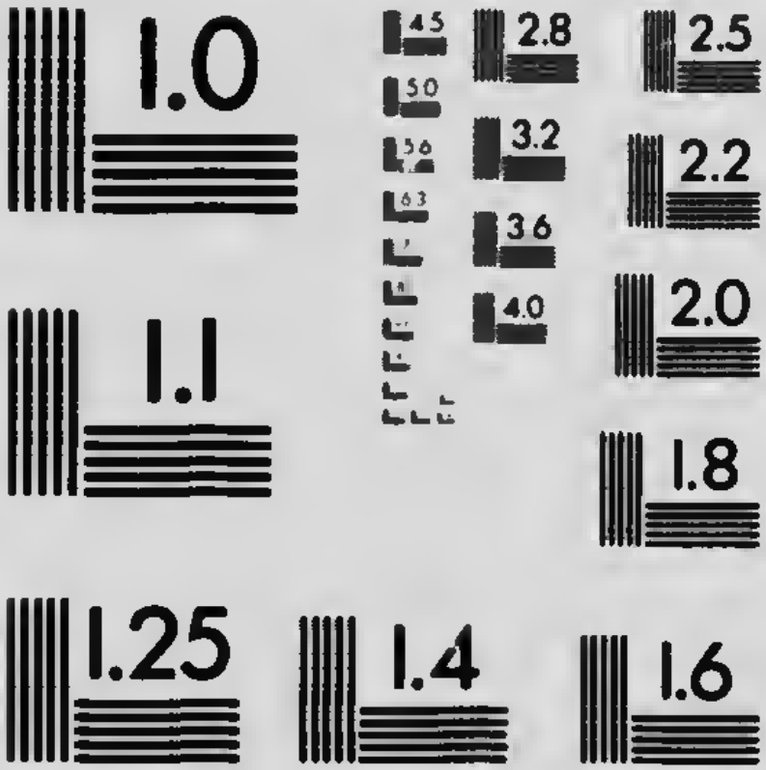

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green embroidery, and the chairs, upholstered in orange and sky-blue velvet, made up a gorgeous whole, in which I felt rather like a prisoner, as I had to retreat constantly to my apartment, pull the shutters to, and sit in a dim twilight when the Chinese *Amban* and other callers arrived in state.

Guma is noted for its manufacture of paper, and we went to see the process. The pale green lining of the bark of the mulberry is boiled in great iron pots and ladled out upon broad stones, to be pulped by wooden hammers. The mixture is then spread over canvas-filled frames which are held under water during the operation, and afterwards set upright in the open air to dry, when sheets of a coarse whitish paper about the size of foolscap can be pulled off the canvas. This paper is mainly used for packing; if needed for writing, it is rubbed with glass to glaze it.

As the oasis is rich in mulberry trees it produces a considerable amount of silk; but Khotan is the chief centre of this profitable industry. The women tend the silkworms.

The soil of Guma is so sandy that the inhabitants cannot build the usual mud-houses, but are obliged to have recourse to wattle-and-daub structures, composed of a framework of sticks plastered inside and out with a mixture that is for ever dropping off in flakes, thereby giving to these dwellings a most unsubstantial air. I noticed that in the cemeteries the graves were marked by tall withered saplings, to denote the sites when they are covered up by the all-pervading sand.

The time of our visit coincided with the *Mizan* or Equinox, which is supposed to mark the close of the hot weather, and the "kindly fruits of the

earth" were nearly ready for the harvest. The cotton crop was being gathered, its bursting pods lying on the ground; the handsome man-high maize and millet were yellowing, and we revelled in delicious corn cobs, boiled and then smeared with butter and sprinkled with salt, as I had learned to eat them in Canada. We were also given another vegetable, the roots of the lotus, which the Chinese look upon as a delicacy; but it did not appeal to my taste. The pomegranates were a glorious scarlet and the many varieties of grapes were in their prime; the melons, peaches and nectarines had passed their zenith.

On the evening before we left Guma our servants, together with the various travellers who had attached themselves to our party, organized an entertainment. There was much singing, the performers yelling at the top of their voices, accompanied by a thrumming of *sitars*, a thudding of drums and a squealing of pipes. Three of the men executed a pantomime dance, one being disguised as a woman, another as an old man, and the third, a handsome young fellow, having no make-up at all. All three went round in a circle one after the other with curious steps and much waving of arms, the play being based on the well-known theme of the girl-wife snatched from an old husband by her youthful lover. I felt rather like an Oriental woman as I watched the show from behind a curtain, and was amused to hear later that I was considered to be a model of discreet behaviour because I had not attended any of the Chinese banquets.

It was rather disturbing at night to hear the Chinese watchman going his rounds, beating two sticks together as an assurance to the citizens that he was guarding them faithfully, but I fancy that he and his

colleagues were of the Dogberry type and would probably pretend not to notice were any devilry afoot.

Although we saw very little veiling after we had left Yarkand, this Mohamedan custom prevailing less and less the nearer we approached China, the women were extremely nervous at our approach, having seldom or never seen Europeans. They would rush in all directions, hiding their faces in the long cotton shawls which they wore over their heads, and would vanish like rabbits into their mud hovels, giving me the queer sense of being watched by legions of eyes as we rode through the mean bazars. There were many public eating-houses in this part of the world, with Chinese painted screens to hide the customers seated behind them, and with gaily coloured pictures on the walls. The food was cooked in big cauldrons in full view of the public, and I was told that the restaurant-keepers, who are Tunganis (Chinese Moslems) usually become rich, especially in one district, where both men and women take all their meals in public. As a rule no payment is demanded until six months have elapsed, and then mine host goes round to collect his debts, with the not uncommon result that greedy folk who have partaken too lavishly of the seven dishes provided are obliged to sell their property in order to pay up. Fuel is certainly a heavy item for the poor, who use it only for cooking and not to heat their houses; therefore these restaurants, if used with discretion, ought to make for economy.

During this journey the weather as a rule was perfect—fresh in the morning and evening, quite cold at night, and only during the middle of the day uncomfortably hot. I felt as if I were on a riding-

tour and picnic combined, so little of the discomforts of travel did we experience, the supply question being easy and our servants doing their work with scarcely a hitch. At night we generally slept in the open air under our mosquito nets, and when the full moon rode across the heavens I was often obliged to bandage my eyes to shut out the brilliant light.

It was on our march between Sang-uya and Pialma that the desert, for once, showed itself in an unamiable mood. The morning was fine when we left our comfortable quarters in a Chinese country house, and we soon entered the region of sand-dunes, our horses racing up and down them with much spirit, though the loose sand made the going very heavy. We stopped a picturesque party of wayfarers with their donkeys in order to photograph them, and gave them money for their trouble. They posed themselves and their animals as my brother directed, but when we had finished they remarked that they had expected to be shot, as they imagined the camera to be some kind of firearm! Not unnaturally I thought that this was a joke on their part, but later on we passed a company of beggars, and my brother took a group consisting of a wild-looking woman leading an ox and a man wearing a red leather sugar-loaf hat. I noticed that the latter clasped his hands in an attitude of entreaty as he stood perfectly motionless beside the animal, and when he received his douceur he burst into speech, saying with many exclamations that he had verily believed that his last hour had come. These incidents gave me a glimpse of the docile spirit of the race, and partly explained why the inhabitants of Chinese Turkestan have nearly always been ruled by a succession of foreign masters. They are small

cultivators and petty shopkeepers, taking little interest in anything outside their immediate circle, and their life seems to destroy initiative and independence, thus rendering the task of their Chinese rulers easy.

The morning breeze that blew in our faces was pleasant enough at first, but gradually turned into a gale, which raised the sand in such great clouds that the sun and sky were obscured with a yellow haze. In spite of my veil and blue goggles the grit whipped my face and eyes as we galloped our fastest in order to reach our destination before matters grew worse. The horses were much excited, being as anxious as we were to escape from the whirling sand, and it was annoying when the grey broke loose from the rider who was leading him and cantered off until we nearly lost sight of him in the thick haze. A couple of men did their best to head him back, while the rest of us waited, my chestnut screaming loudly and plunging violently in his eagerness to join in the chase. The grey behaved in the usual provoking manner of horses on the loose, circling round and round us, almost letting himself be caught, and then galloping off a short distance before he returned to coquet with the other horses. Finally my brother made a lucky snatch at the trailing halter, and off we went faster than ever, noting with thankfulness *potai* after *potai* as they loomed up out of the blinding dust. Suddenly a change occurred that seemed almost like magic. We plunged into a tree-bordered lane with fields of maize stretching on either side, while overhead the clear blue sky seemed free from every particle of dust. I looked back at the whirling yellow inferno from which we had escaped, and in a few minutes thankfully dismounted in a large garden

with irrigation channels through which the water flowed with a faint delicious splashing. Here our tents were in readiness, pitched under shady trees, and hot tea was brought that served a double purpose; for we found it a soothing lotion for our sore eyes as well as grateful to our parched throats.

The waggons, which had done this last stage during the night, left again at five o'clock in the afternoon, as the horses would be forced to do a double stage of some thirty miles, with no water obtainable on the road. But the animals had had thirteen hours' rest and the going was good for the first part of the way, so we hoped they would be able to manage it. We ourselves were to break the stage at Ak Langar, some fourteen miles away, and rest there for four hours before undertaking the remainder of the march, which, we were told, was a continuous series of lofty sand-dunes. Accordingly, after our evening meal we mounted at seven o'clock, and leaving the little oasis, rode off under the full moon across an absolutely barren gravelly desert. We were told that some years before our visit a governor of Khotan had placed posts at intervals along this stage, upon which lamps were hung and lighted on dark nights. Unluckily this benefactor, a *rara avis* among officials, failing to keep his finances in order, was dismissed from his post and was now dragging out a precarious existence in the Chinatown of Kashgar.

We of course stood in no need of lanterns, but in spite of the moonlight the desert seemed rather eerie, and our horses, unaccustomed to night marches, were curiously nervous and suddenly shied at some dark moving shapes that turned out to be camels grazing on the scanty tamarisk scrub. A little farther on

they were startled by a large dog, which we disturbed at its meal on a dead ass, and here and there the moon gleamed on the white bones of deceased pack-animals that lay beside the track. I am not ashamed to confess that I should not have cared to ride this stage alone, and I did not wonder that the peasants whom we passed driving laden donkeys were always in large parties.

After a while we came to a ruined *potai*, against which a rough post was leaning, and learnt that this was the boundary between the districts of Kargalik and Khotan. We were therefore in the Kingdom of Jade, and our horses, having become used to their novel experience, trotted along briskly in the keen night air, pricking their ears and hastening whenever they espied the remains of a deserted serai sharply silhouetted in the moonlight; for they were as anxious for their night's rest as I was.

With the exception I have mentioned there were no *potais* to mark this particular route, so I had not the pleasing sensation of knowing that two and a quarter miles were accomplished whenever we passed one, and was feeling extremely sleepy, when a black mass of building seemed to rear up suddenly ahead of us. It was just upon midnight, and I was most thankful to dismount and pass into a serai built of hewn stone, the welcome cleanliness of its rooms being due to the fact that practically no one halted there, owing to the lack of water. Yet the first sight that met my eyes was a man drawing up a bucket from a well by means of a windlass; but Jafar Bai explained that the water was bitter and harmful to horses.

The natives had given us such alarming accounts of the difficulties of the latter part of the stage that,

tired as we all were, we were allowed to sleep for only four hours, and it seemed to me as if I had hardly closed my eyes when Sattur roused me. He brought a lighted candle by which I dressed; for my room had no window and opened on to the public courtyard, and a fat pigeon, disturbed by the light, flopped down from the rafters and fluttered feebly round and round until I let it out.

When we rode off in the crisp air of the early morning we were surprised to find that for some miles ahead of us the road lay across a gravelly plain that made excellent going for horses and baggage waggons. Close to the serai four huge vultures were feeding on the remains of a dead camel, and the loathsome birds were so gorged that on the approach of our party they could only with difficulty flap or hobble away for a few feet; they watched us until we had passed and then returned to their interrupted meal. How horrible it must be for a dying animal to be ringed about with these birds biding their time, or even fastening on their prey before life is extinct! Owing to the recent storm the atmosphere was unusually clear, and we enjoyed the somewhat rare experience of seeing the lower slopes of the Kuen-lun range, the existence of which was not even mentioned by Marco Polo, presumably on account of its invisibility, which is notorious.

After a while we rode among low sand-dunes curved and ribbed by the wind, and then crossed a high ridge that was more like a low hill than a dune and must have meant a stiff pull for even our five-horse *arabas*. Below its crest stood a couple of wooden posts, signifying that we had reached the boundary of the famous *Kaptar Mazzar* or Pigeon

Shrine, where all good Moslems must dismount to approach the sacred spot on foot. There in the midst of the sand lay a graveyard marked by poles on which hung fluttering rags and bits of sheepskin, and near by was a tiny mosque with fretted wooden door and window and some low buildings, the roofs of which were crowded with grey pigeons. Legend has it that *Imam* Shakir Padshah, trying to convert the Buddhist inhabitants of the country to Islam by the drastic agency of the sword, fell here in battle against the army of Khotan and was buried in the little cemetery. It is affirmed that two doves flew forth from the heart of the dead saint and became the ancestors of the swarms of sacred pigeons that we saw. Our arrival caused a stir among them and a great cloud rose up, with a tremendous whirring of wings, and some settled upon the maize that our party flung upon the ground as an offering.

The guardian of the shrine, in long blue coat and white turban, left his study of the Koran and, accompanied by his little scarlet-clad daughter, hurried to meet us. My brother asked them to attract their charges to the graveyard, where he wished to photograph them; but unluckily the holy birds entirely declined to be enticed in that direction, paying no attention to the grain flung lavishly or to the voice of the *mulla*. They merely wheeled round and round in lessening circles until they descended on to the roofs of the pigeon-houses; for they were sated with the offerings of the Faithful and extremely fat. It might be thought that these birds, which are supposed to eat their own weight daily, would be a menace to the crops of the neighbouring Zawa oasis, but fortunately food is so abundant at home that

THE PIGEON SHRINE.

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they hardly leave the vicinity of the shrine. They are certainly highly favoured; for we were told that if a hawk were to venture to attack them it would fall down dead in the act!

We visited the sheds fitted with flat nests of basket work, on many of which were fluffy yellow fledglings, and beams were laid from wall to wall on which the birds could perch. As may be imagined, the smell and dirt deterred me from taking more than a glance at this pigeon sanctuary; but our servants had no such qualms, and probably felt that the longer they stayed the more merit would accrue to them. Sir Aurel Stein shows that the legend about these pigeons is merely a variant of Hiuen Tsiang's story of the sacred golden-haired rats, to whose burrowings the pilgrim attributed the conical sand-dunes that lie round this spot. The province, so the narrative runs, was invaded by a barbarian host that encamped close to the mounds thrown up by the creatures, whose aid the King of Khotan invoked in his despair. During the night a huge rat came to him in a vision, promising him success, and on the morrow, when the men of Khotan fell upon the enemy, they gained an easy victory, because the rats had gnawed the harness of the horses, the fastenings of the armour and the bowstrings of the invaders. From that day the miraculous rodents were accorded high honour: a temple was erected in the midst of the dunes, in which sacrifices were offered to them and where all who passed by worshipped and brought gifts, misfortunes falling upon those who neglected to do so. The pigeon has now taken the place of the rat of Buddhist legend in the minds of these primitive people, with whom tradition dies hard.

When we left the shrine we were prepared to cope with the gigantic dunes that we had been warned to expect; but, not for the first time, we grasped the inaccuracy of most of the statements made by the natives, there being only two or three somewhat difficult places for waggons. At the foot of the sandy waste in which the *Mazzar* stood was a stretch of reed-covered marshy ground, watered by a wide stream alive with water-fowl, beyond which flocks were grazing. We soon saw ahead of us the remarkably lofty weeping-willows of Zawa, and fetched up finally at a small garden beyond the village, where we found our tents ready pitched under the trees and were all thankful for a good rest and a general tidying up, in anticipation of our entry into Khotan on the morrow.

CHAPTER XI

KHOTAN THE KINGDOM OF JADE

There is no article of traffic more valuable than lumps of a certain transparent kind of marble, which we, from poverty of language, usually call jasper. These marbles are called by the Chinese Iusce.[1] —BENEDICT GOES, 1603 A.D.

To Mrs. St. George Littledale belongs the distinction of being the first English, if not European, woman to enter the town of Khotan, and I felt proud at being the next to follow in her footsteps. We had travelled over three hundred miles from Kashgar to this farthest city in the East of Chinese Turkestan, and hundreds of miles of desert lay between it and any place of importance in the Celestial Empire. A broad sandy road shaded by trees led to the capital, broken only by the wide stony bed of the Karakash River, the three branches of which we forded with ease, since much of the water had been drawn off for irrigation purposes into a broad canal.

Khan Sahib Badrudin, the British Agent, a fine-looking old man in a long coat of rich brocade and a snowy turban, met us and, dismounting from his showy horse, conducted us to the usual *dasturkhwan.* We were told that he wielded great power in the city. He was so frank and hearty that I took to

[1] *Iusce* is *Yu-shih* or Jade stone.

him on the spot, and after running the gauntlet of the other receptions, we were conducted by him to his newly built and elaborately ornamented garden-house. During our tour we had the good fortune to be quartered in three entirely new residences, which any traveller who knows the dirt and squalor of the East will recognise as no small boon.

Badrudin's "garden," in common with all that I saw, was intersected with irrigation channels, had no paths, and was planted with a confused, ill-grown mass of fruit trees, so crowded together that his orchard produced a very indifferent crop. Flowers are usually conspicuous by their absence in these pleasaunces, although one sometimes comes across zinnias, asters and marigolds, but to me their redeeming feature was the *shefang*, and at Khotan the open-air parlour was a particularly large and handsome one, curtained round with muslin that ensured some privacy without excluding the air.

The trees surrounding it were the roosting-place of hundreds of small birds, and about five o'clock every evening they would appear in a large flock and a fearful squabbling would ensue, caused, I imagined, by their desire to take possession of one another's pet twigs. After half an hour they settled down, and only a few drowsy murmurs would be heard as one bird or another made a sleepy remark.

At Khotan I was anxious to replenish our butter-jars, but fear that no one will believe me when I say that the united efforts of five cows during two days only resulted in a single pound of butter! There is no grazing in these oases, and the animals are allowed on the fields only when the crops have been gathered, their usual feed being a bundle of lucerne,

fresh or dried according to the season, a meagre dietary not conducive to a plentiful supply of milk.

My brother, as in all towns, was busy in receiving and returning official visits and in settling cases, some of which had been in abeyance for years. One of these interested me particularly, as I was brought into touch with it in a way. It was concerned with righting a widow whose relatives were trying to defraud her of property that justly belonged to her, and the poor soul waylaid me as I was returning from a ride and, seizing my hand, kissed it repeatedly, with loud lamentations that went to my heart. When justice had been done, and she was reinstated, the old lady came to my brother to express her gratitude, which she evinced by kissing the hem of his riding-coat, to his great embarrassment.

I had visitors of my own, as Badrudin's three wives, accompanied by his eldest son, wearing a suit of would-be British cut, called upon me. The chief wife was a handsome Afghan lady, her eyebrows painted with antimony in order to make them meet across her forehead, and as she spoke Persian we got on well together. She had plenty of character, and it was evident that she kept the other wives in due subjection. Despite the heat the ladies wore rich velvet jackets and had gold or silver braid on the brims of their velvet hats, and long white shawls shrouding them from head to foot. They enjoyed sampling the cakes and biscuits that I provided for tea, and liked seeing the curios that we had bought in the town, some quaint jade monkeys throwing them all into convulsions of laughter and most effectually breaking the ice between my visitors and myself. As a result I felt quite at home with them when I

went next day to return their call, merely passing through a door in the wall of our garden into theirs, where I found them installed in a shabby old house very different from the gorgeous edifice in which we had our quarters, and which I suspected would be entirely reserved for the men of the household when we departed. Owing to the emigration of the men, the women, as at Kashgar and Yarkand, are in great preponderance, and here, as throughout Chinese Turkestan, the cheapness of marriage encourages frequent divorce and so lowers the status of the wives.

But, on the other hand, the women mix freely with the men, sell their wares in the bazars and practically dispense with the face-veil. It may be that the superior freedom enjoyed by the women of Khotan centuries ago has been handed down to their descendants. According to Rémusat, the Chinese writers remark again and again that the women mixed with the men even when strangers were present, and rode like the men on horses and camels. It is curious to note that over a thousand years ago the women wore the long coats and trousers and plaited their hair just as they do at the present day, the hair of yaks' tails being used then as now to thicken and lengthen these tresses, which are adorned with gold or silver tassels.

Badrudin rode out with us one morning to see Ilchi, as the inhabitants call their city, and I thought that the people looked as sickly as those of Yarkand. Goitre was very prevalent, and there were, alas, many idiots to be seen, both the bodily and the mental afflictions being probably caused by the limited supply of water, which is kept in tanks, a sure method in the East of propagating disease.

BEGGARS AT THE GATE.

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Three years before our visit a large part of the principal bazar had been destroyed by fire, and our host had lost many shops on this occasion; but the visitation was a blessing in disguise, for neat wooden stalls with well-made shutters had been built in place of the former dirty, untidy booths. We were taken to see the principal mosques and shrines, architecturally beneath notice and all very shabby in appearance, and beyond the bazar was the dismantled mud brick fort erected by Yakub Beg. Separated from the old native town was the modern China-town, walled in and dominated by a fort, and on all sides stretched the well-watered oasis. Maize, barley, millet, buckwheat, rice, cotton, hemp, grapes, peaches, melons and mulberries were grown in abundance, while the numberless irrigation channels were planted with poplars and willows which serve as fuel.

Khotan is famous for its silks and felts, its cotton cloth, carpets, paper and jade, but the modern silk carpets with their aniline dyes are not artistic, and the few old ones to be found command an exorbitant price. In Rockhill's *Life of the Buddha* there is a curious legend relating to the introduction of the silk industry into the province. A king of Khotan married a Chinese princess, who wished to benefit the country of her adoption by teaching its inhabitants how to make silk. She had brought the eggs of the silkworm with her, concealed in her hat, as one version has it; but the Chinese ministers, who were determined that Cathay should retain the monopoly of a lucrative trade, told the credulous king that the harmless worms would turn into venomous serpents and ravage the land. The monarch in a panic commanded the rearing-house to be burnt down; but his wife managed

to save some of the caterpillars, and later on appeared in beautiful garments woven from their silk. Her husband, realizing that he had been duped by the Chinese, repented of his foolish act and thenceforth warmly fostered an industry that greatly contributed to the prosperity of his kingdom.

Silk is said to have been made in China from remote ages, for it is recorded that to the wife of an emperor who reigned about 21,640 B.C. (*sic*) belongs the credit of inventing the loom; but the secret was guarded so jealously that centuries passed before the industry took root in Khotan and Central Asia. At the commencement of the Christian era raw silk was literally worth its weight in gold, and we read that the Emperor Justinian had a monopoly of the costly stuff and set up weaving-looms in his palace. The story goes that he persuaded two Persian monks to bring him the precious eggs from Cathay at the risk of their lives, for death would have been the penalty had the Chinese discovered the contents of the hollow bamboo staff which they carried to Byzantium about A.D. 550. Khotan is believed to be the district from which those eggs and the great silk industry of Europe actually came, and only at the present day has it been necessary to procure a fresh supply of the former from the East to renew the original stock brought across the desert so many centuries ago.

It was interesting to visit the chief silk factory of Khotan, where thousands of pale yellow cocoons were being boiled in big cauldrons, in defiance of the command of the Chinese princess, who said that such a proceeding was a sin against the light, and would be followed by a silkworm famine during the following year. Beside these vats women were squatting who

deftly picked a thread from each cocoon, unwinding it until it was ready to be handed on to other women sitting beside primitive spinning-wheels, who wound the threads off upon a spool. From small reels the shining silk was wound on to large ones, and finally it was hung up in thick hanks of delicious creamy colour, ready for export. The native-woven silk is coarse in texture and dull when compared with that produced from European looms, but when dyed with deep vegetable colourings it has an indescribably rich appearance, and much of it is exported to India.

Yu is the Chinese name for jade or nephrite, and Yu-tien or Khotan signifies Kingdom of Jade; therefore I was naturally anxious to obtain all the information I could about this stone, which is valued above all others in China and is even spoken of as "the quintessence of Heaven and Earth." The jade of Khotan has been known to the Chinese for over two thousand years. Rémusat points out that there are references to it as far back as 140 B.C., and it was often sent as tribute from the rulers of the province to the Emperor of China.

One Chinese author compares a wise man to jade, affirming that both have five of the same good qualities, and another talks of the different colours of the stone, saying it is red as the comb of a cock, yellow as a cooked chestnut, and so on. Again, a third writer affirms that it gives forth light and a perfume, and others speak of its weight and of the way in which it can be imitated and how easily it can be dyed.

In popular belief the Jade River was separated into three branches that carried down the white, black and green varieties respectively from the mines situated at its source; and in bygone days the King

of Khotan used to inaugurate the "Jade Harvest," or season of the year when his subjects began to fish in the streams for the precious stone. This beautiful mineral is found in veins running through rocks of schist or gneiss, and is of almost every shade of white, grey, green, yellow, or black. Until the recent revolution it was worn profusely by the royalties and their courtiers, and was buried with the dead in the form of bracelets and amulets, a carved bowl, screen or goblet being a choice gift for the Emperor to send to a ruling sovereign, in which connection a jade screen presented to Queen Victoria was valued at £300,000 by English experts.

Badrudin took us into the town to see the jade workers turning cups on lathes and polishing them by means of sand. On the ground lay some small dull green boulders, the stone in its raw state, and I was told that, had they been white flecked with green, they would have fetched between two and three hundred pounds apiece. After the white, the yellow is the most highly prized, and then comes the green and lastly the black, for which the famous cenotaph of Tamerlane at Samarkand is renowned. But alas, since the revolution the royal stone is no longer popular in China, and the export to Peking has practically ceased. To counterbalance this there is a small demand for it in India, where it is bought by the British; but so low has the industry fallen that my brother and I could not procure nearly as many cups as we wished. The best that we found were a transparent black speckled with moss green, most beautiful when held up to the light; but only four of these goblets could be bought, and the rest of our purchases were in an attractive dull reseda green

that reminded me of sea-water in its translucent delicacy.

One day we rode out to inspect the old jade pits several miles to the east of the city, Badrudin supplying us with horses, as our own always enjoyed a well-earned rest whenever we halted. He and his son escorted us through the Oasis to the broad stone-strewn bed of the Yurungkash or White Jade River, which we easily forded. We then trotted and cantered along sandy paths between the high mud walls of countless gardens. Our goal was a wide tract, formerly a river-bed, now a series of pits ringed with boulders, the result of digging for jade during the centuries. The sand-dunes of the great desert had crept to the edge of the masses of rubble, among which our horses painfully stumbled as we examined the so-called mines, holes about a doze t in depth. It is at that distance from the surface t. the blocks of jade washed down in bygone days are to be found, the jade obtained from the mines being soft and inferior in quality. Few finds of value are made nowadays, and all good pieces are sent direct to Peking, the Khotan craftsmen being unable to execute the carving for which the Chinese are famous. The glory of Khotan was its jade, and it was owing to the high esteem in which the Chinese held this stone that we hear so much about the province from the early pilgrims and travellers.

When the Chinese travellers Fa-hien and Hiuen Tsiang visited the province, in the fifth and seventh centuries respectively, there were many towns in the kingdom which are now buried beneath the desert sand, and according to the accounts of both pilgrims there were a hundred Buddhist monasteries in the

Oasis. It appears that the Khotanis were not whole-hearted followers of the Master, for we hear that the adherents to Buddhism were violently persecuted towards the end of the ninth century, by those that worshipped spirits; but the religion lingered on until it was finally extinguished by Islam, which swept like a great wave through Chinese Turkestan.

On the day that we left Ilchi we made a *détour* in order to visit the site of Yotkan, which was the capital of the province a thousand years ago. Old Badrudin led us a zigzag course round low-walled fields, and after four or five miles announced that we had reached our goal. We then dismounted and scrambled down a muddy slope on to a stretch of cultivated ground at the foot of a low cliff. This latter had been cut through by a *yar*, or ravine created by the action of the water which had escaped from an irrigation canal, and this *yar* revealed bits of gold and *débris* of all kinds on its banks. Sir Aurel Stein, who began his famous excavations with the investigation of this site, points out that without this fortunate accident the city so often mentioned in the Chinese annals might never have been discovered. The inhabitants of the village close by immediately began to dig for treasure, washing the earth for gold, and by their efforts the fields had been lowered several feet, because the strata containing the finds were some thirteen feet beneath the surface. Sir Aurel Stein discovered no remains of buildings, but was not surprised at this, for mud bricks crumble away in the course of centuries; and it also occurred to me that perhaps the peasants may follow the custom of the Persian cultivator, who uses the *débris* of ruins as a dressing for his crops. Moreover, as the fields

lying on the site of Yotkan were irrigated, the action of the water would soon disintegrate any buildings constructed of sun-dried bricks. The fact that the soil lies to-day some nine to twenty feet above the old capital is due to the system of irrigation; for the water let in over the fields carries much silt with it. The roads throughout all the oases in Turkestan are from this cause much lower than the fields, while the cemeteries, not being cultivated, are at about the same level as the roads.

Badrudin told us the current legend that Yotkan had been destroyed by a great flood which overwhelmed both the city and its inhabitants, but Sir Aurel Stein shows this theory to be untenable, although he apparently offers no other to account for the desertion of what was an important city ten centuries ago.

Our host showed us various interesting objects found on the spot, a beautiful terra-cotta vase with a Buddha on either side being the chief, together with tiny terra-cotta figurines and a white jade ring. I was told that the Chinese archers wear these rings on their little fingers to keep them from being cut when they twang their bows. Sir Aurel Stein bought a tiny monkey made of gold, and says that there is still a small but profitable yield of the precious metal in the form of gold-leaf, which was used extensively to decorate the Buddhist temples and statues. Fa-hien mentions the splendour of these shrines and their attendant monasteries in the fifth century, and Rémusat gives details of the gorgeous ceremonial worship.

When we left Yotkan we rode to Zawa, where we rested, in anticipation of the night march across

the desert to the serai of Ak Langar. In spite of our protests, genial old Badrudin insisted on accompanying us thus far on our homeward way, and it was not till half-past eight that night that with sincere regret we said good-bye to him. The moon, now in its third quarter, had not risen, and our late host did us a final good office by sending his body-servant ahead of our party, carrying a little native lamp of classic design with two wicks hanging from its spout. He proved a most useful torch-bearer, for the darkness under the trees of the oasis seemed impenetrable at first, and he pointed out the many small bridges and irrigation channels over which our horses might have come to grief in the all-pervading gloom. Time and again the feeble light seemed about to be extinguished by the breeze, but it held out until we were free of the village, and we were then put in charge of a Chinese runner who was to be our guide across the sand-dunes. The British Agent's trusty henchman now dismounted, kissed my brother's knee in token of farewell and, to my astonishment, actually *wept*, though I cynically reflected that this emotion must be due rather to the amount of his *pourboire* than to affection for the British Consul.

Half an hour later the moon cast a faint gleam across the desert, and we walked our horses in the track of the tall, wiry guide who kept ahead of us all the time, now and then breaking into a run when he reached the crest of a dune or descending it with great leaps. Our horses certainly walked at the rate of four miles an hour on an average, but the *ya-yieh* did the ten miles to the serai without turning a hair and arrived in better condition than I did. I had had a fatiguing day; for there is always much

to do when setting off again after a longish halt, and, counting the distance to and from Yotkan, I had ridden nearly forty miles. This in itself was nothing, as I loved being in the saddle; but it was trying to set off on a *second* march at the hour when I was usually making ready for bed, and I felt grateful to the pure tonic air of the desert that made me feel as fit as ever on the morrow.

Having retraced our steps to Yarkand, we made a *détour* by way of Merket, my brother being anxious to see that part of the country and to shoot some of the pheasants named after Shaw. We and our horses were again punted across the main stream of the river, and then had to ride warily, following defined tracks in order to escape the dangerous quicksands, and when we forded branches of the stream we avoided places where stakes protruding from the water warned us of holes or treacherous sands. It was rather a relief to clamber out upon the loess banks of the river, from which we had picturesque glimpses of sandy islets on which duck and water-birds were feeding, and I remember the delicious perfume of the melons that were laid out to dry in a field close to our encampment for the night.

It was mid-October when we reached Merket, and my brother, who had had many disappointments as to the duck-shooting he had been promised, felt his hopes revive as the natives spoke of a lake some four miles off which simply teemed with water-fowl. I suppose it is inbred in Orientals to say what they think will please a superior; the peasants at all events were seemingly unconcerned as to whether their statements were accurate or not. On this occasion, for example, the so-called lake turned out to be a

small marsh dried up by the summer heats and with never a sign of bird-life among its withered rushes. This was rather a blow; but, on making enquiry about game at a prosperous-looking village that lay outside one of the wide belts of stunted trees through which the sandy road led, we heard that the jungle was swarming with pheasants. A party of beaters was improvised on the spot, and my brother went off full of hope, while I rode slowly on with old Jafar Bai and the one-legged Hindu trader, having agreed to halt for our mid-day meal a couple of miles farther on. And now the Hindu began to play the well-known game of dangling a lure before the European, the bait in my case being water. He professed that he knew every inch of the road and that a refreshing stream was close at hand; but, when we had ridden considerably farther than the stipulated distance, I revolted, and stopping in the shade of the trees ordered lunch to be served as soon as Sattur and his *mapa* arrived. Hardly had I finished when the sporting party cantered up with the disheartening news that they had not seen a single pheasant. It was a day of disappointments; for, as we were riding into camp, a servant rushed up with the news that wild-duck were in abundance on a lake near which we had passed. Hope again revived, and off my brother went, but, as usual, after a *fata Morgana*. This day is a sample of many. During our halt at Merket my brother shot only two or three of the Shaw pheasants, and he had no luck when he rode off at five o'clock in the morning to watch the great hunting eagles bring down gazelle, although they made successful flights at hares. Probably the scarcity of game is owing to the fact that the country is comparatively

A DULANI *SHAYKH.*

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thickly populated and well-cultivated, and that many of the peasants are sportsmen and have no scruples as to close seasons.

Just outside the village my brother was met by an old greybeard who saluted in military style, and it turned out that he had been formerly in a Panjabi regiment, and had been sent into Turkestan with letters for Dalgleish, whose murder resounded through Central Asia a generation ago.

Merket is interesting as being the home of the Dulanis, supposed to be Kirghiz who settled on the land a couple of centuries ago when the Kalmucks ruled the province. These people are remarkable as being Moslems who mix freely with their women, the latter going about unveiled, and eating, dancing and singing with the men at entertainments which often last the whole night long. They have a great reputation as singers, and one morning we were favoured with a performance, the songster being a tall greybeard clad in a long red robe and a sheepskin cap. He beat on a tambourine-like instrument, throwing his head into the air and emitting tremendously long-drawn notes and then taking breath in deep gasps, much as the Germans sing their *Lieder* in Lutheran churches. His songs seemed full of repetition, he made fearful grimaces, and as he yelled at the top of his voice, I was not surprised that after a while he became hoarse. His companion played a *rubab*, a stringed instrument much like a mandoline, the plectrum being a bit of wood, and crowds of villagers gathered to hear the performance, to which they listened in enraptured silence; for we were told that the singer was renowned throughout the district.

Iftikhar Ahmad kindly translated for me two of his songs, which run as follows :

If I say that I am a Mohamedan and do not keep the commands of Allah
How shall I escape punishment when I am laid in the dark grave ?
No young girls will dance at my bidding.
They have blackened their eyebrows with *kohl* and refuse to bow down before the youths.

The second is the lament of a love-sick maiden :

1

Oh, my beloved, fresh coloured as an apple,
I entrust thee to the keeping of Allah until we meet again.

2

Oh, that I could ride to Aksu on my white horse newly-shod,
Or could see thee, my love, walking beside the river.

3

I am feeble as a rush. I am in the power of a giant ;
I cannot sleep at night and am forced to think of thee all day long.

4

Alas, my love has gone from me in anger and how shall I persuade him to forgive me ?
I will place tea [1] before him and by dancing and smiling I will make my peace with him.

The Merket bazar was one of the poorest and most squalid I had seen in the course of my travels, and was in curious contrast to the apparent prosperity of the large oasis. The inhabitants, who hovered about our camp all day long, were certainly of a lower type than the ordinary villagers of Chinese Turkestan, but as far as I could judge they did not merit the scathing condemnation of one writer, who says : "These people are in the most backward state of human intelligence that it is possible to imagine

[1] To offer tea is a symbol of apology.

DU'LANI MUSICIANS.

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human beings to be capable of. In physical strength and stature they are perhaps the most miserable objects on the face of the earth, but their social position is still more deplorable . . ."

When we left Merket we plunged into sand covered with low tamarisk scrub and the *toghrak* tree, *populus heterophyllus*, peculiar, I understand, to Chinese Turkestan, which looks like a cross between the willow and the poplar. When this tree is quite young all the leaves are pinnated, like those of the willow; at an older stage the upper part has the poplar leaf, and when it is full-grown there is no trace of the narrow willow-like leaf, which has dropped off. It was now mid-October and the foliage was a brilliant gold, bright as the trees in a Canadian fall, but without the flaming scarlets of the maple and oak of the Dominion.

We and our belongings had to cross the Yarkand River again in one of the clumsy ferry-boats, and the vigorous-looking boatman was obliged to make such Herculean efforts to pole his unwieldy craft round that I was not surprised to learn that men of his calling contract heart complaint from the strain.

The ferryman's wife, a handsome young woman, charmingly clad in a rainbow-striped coat and a green velvet gold-embroidered cap, watched her husband's progress, and I was told that she was a Dulani. Certainly she looked a credit to her tribe, as she strolled about unconcernedly among the men, with many of whom she exchanged greetings. Her bare feet were thrust into the overshoes that all wear over the long riding-boots, and her big silver earrings added to the picturesqueness of her appearance. I was seated on a felt beside a table heaped with grapes and melons,

and smiled at her as she gradually edged up to me on pretence of flicking the flies off the fruit. She held her pretty little boy by the hand, the child all too warmly clad in a padded red coat and fur cap, and a small gift unsealed her lips, putting us on such friendly terms that she was delighted to be photographed by the first European woman she had ever seen.

And now we turned our backs on the Yarkand River and were piloted across sandy tracks and rode through barren spaces dotted with tamarisk, towards the dunes of a strip of desert, the loose sand of which made the going heavy for our horses. The sun sank at half-past five and, as is usual in the East, there was hardly any twilight, but by the waning moonlight we could see the track as we plodded along, our horses snorting suspiciously and starting at isolated tamarisk bushes or stunted *toghrak* trees. At last we surmounted a dune and saw below us a deserted mud building and the gleam of a pool of water, indicating the goal of our march. To me there was something curiously eerie in the scene; for the moonlight cast strange shadows, and the desert seemed as if it were listening for I knew not what, reminding me of Meredith's lines:

> I neighbour the invisible
> So close that my consent
> Is only asked for spirits masked
> To leap from trees and flowers.

The servants and horses had disappeared round the ruined rest-house, and I had a queer sense that things seldom seen by mortal eyes would have revealed themselves had I been quite alone. I remember strolling up to a largish *toghrak* tree, under which

A DULANI WOMAN AND HER SON.

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a little tent was to be pitched for me, and what was perhaps a big rat ran down the bark with incredible speed and seemed to vanish, and later on, as my brother and I walked back along the road to listen for the *mapa* which was to bring Sattur and our evening meal, some creature, probably a fox, noiselessly rushed past us like a flash, giving the impression of being a shadow rather than anything material.

The water here was brown and bitter and smelt so disagreeably that neither we nor our animals could quench our thirst. When the waggons came up they made only a short halt and went on at 2 A.M., and we ourselves followed soon after, as we were anxious to water our horses, not to mention our own thirst.

The usual early morning breeze changed to a wind that blew up clouds of sand; therefore we pushed forward as fast as we could, in case a real sandstorm should overtake us. This particular tract of desert is called *Karakum* or Black Sand, and I imagined that the name must be some kind of native joke, as the sand was particularly white. We rode on hour after hour and were thankful finally to reach a serai, before which stood a trough full of water. My chestnut was so impatient to quench his thirst that he kicked my ankle as I dismounted, presumably to hasten my movements. He was always a bad-tempered animal—*Shaitan* (Satan) the grooms called him—snapping with his ears laid back at any human being or animal within reach; but in spite of this he was my favourite on the march, as none of our other horses could rival his elastic walk and easy canter. I was thankful that he had not started kicking earlier in our acquaintance; for on every subsequent occasion that I rode him he

lashed out at me as I slipped from the saddle, and in order to save me from a broken ankle my brother was obliged to hold up his fore-leg; so perforce I changed to another mount.

There are many advantages in travelling officially, transport and supply being thus made easy, but never before had roads and bridges been mended in honour of our arrival, as was the case in the Merket district. The highway was dotted at intervals with parties of peasants who were piling earth over the many holes in the bridges, and driving rows of stakes into the ground along the irrigation channels where the road had broken away. These stakes would then be padded with maize-bents, reeds or tamarisk scrub, and plastered over with thick lumps of wet mud. This method of road-making, which prevails throughout Chinese Turkestan, is by no means an ideal one, for when the earth and padding fall away the points of the props stick out in a manner most dangerous to horses if going at any pace.

The glorious weather we had had on the whole was now changing, and, after a gale so violent that our tents that night seemed to be in danger every moment, we became aware of the approach of winter. The sun had vanished, a grey veil lay over the landscape, and there was black frost in the air. The villagers had donned their padded red, black or blue long winter coats, those of the women being often striped in many colours, and all wore their pork-pie hats of velvet or cloth edged with fur or sheepskin and looked cold and miserable. Jafar Bai amused us by pointing out a shady spot where we could eat our mid-day lunch, with his usual formula, "Here you will find shelter from the sun," although he himself had told

us that it was now the season of the storms that herald in the winter.

October 20 was the *id*, or festival to commemorate the sacrifice of *Ishmael* by Abraham (so the Koran has it, quite ignoring the Isaac of the Bible), and our servants were naturally eager to arrive at Kashgar on the previous evening, the *id* being an occasion of feasting as well as of prayer in the mosques.

As usual we suffered from the vague ideas of the natives concerning distances, and the so-called twenty-mile ride, that was to bring us within easy reach of Kashgar, dragged out to a thirty-mile march, which, to me at all events, was peculiarly dreary. It lay along sandy tracks crossing great stretches of crumbling salt-encrusted soil, with here and there a reed-covered lake or swamp that alternated with strips of cultivation. The grey mist hung round us, hiding villages and trees until we arrived quite close to them, and seeming to enclose us in a ghostly world with a curiously depressing atmosphere of its own. I felt as if we were in one of Maeterlinck's plays, so heavily did a sense of impending disaster weigh upon me, in spite of vigorous struggles on the part of my common-sense. No misfortune overtook us save that the servants were deprived of the eve of their festival; for my brother decreed that, *id* or no *id*, we should halt for the night by a broad canal running parallel with the Kizil Su. It was well that he did so; for all our horses were tired out, and next day, even with the stimulus of their homes ahead of them, they could scarcely manage the twenty miles that lay between our last camp and Kashgar. Delightful as our tour had been, it was very pleasant to be in a clean, well-built house once more, and to

be welcomed effusively by Bielka and Brownie. I was thankful to see them both in good condition, as well as the sweet little desert lark in its round cage.

Khotan, with its silk and jade, the desert, and the Yarkand River, receded into the background; for in about six weeks' time we should be leaving Kashgar for good, and setting our faces towards Europe and home.

Indeed, I was not altogether sorry, for at first after our return Kashgar, enveloped in a frosty grey mist, was sunless and cold, and the revel of colour that the Kashgaris had displayed in their garments during the summer had gone. Fortunately in this part of the world the winter is short; for the houses are not designed to keep out the cold, and the people are too poor to heat them. Fuel is so dear that it is used only for cooking, and during the day the natives usually sit huddled up in sheltered spots and bask in the sunshine, which luckily does not fail them for long at a time. From December 22 to the beginning of February is called the "Forty Days of the Great Cold," and it is followed by the "Little Cold," which lasts about twenty days. It has sometimes happened, when a wind blew during the "Great Cold," that peasants coming in to market on their donkeys have been frozen to death. In consequence of this the Chinese have passed a law that, if any one demands shelter at a house during this period and dies because the door is shut against him, the inhospitable owner of that house is to be tried for murder.

We had enjoyed the very best of the year, and were fortunate to leave without seeing Kashgar at its worst, graphically described by Lord Dunmore,

thus: "It is as desolate, dirty and uninteresting looking a city as can possibly be imagined . . . a series of yawning abysses; roads full of gaping chasms . . . tumbledown mud houses, obsolete mud cemeteries. . . . [The town is] always either swimming in mud or smothered in dust, and what offends the eye still more is the one uniform melancholy tint of dirty drab that pervades the whole picture. . . ."

To me it will always remain a most picturesque and interesting place, embowered in foliage, surrounded by water and gilded by sunshine, while its brilliantly clad, pleasant-mannered inhabitants greatly contributed to its charm.

. . . . . .

Sir George Macartney arrived in November and we again started off through Central Asia and Northern Europe, reaching home about a month later, when the War, with its urgent claims upon every man and woman, took possession of our thoughts and energies. But I shall never forget the wonderful sunsets of Kashgar seen through a haze of gold, or the glorious dome of Muztagh Ata, the immense sweep of the desert over which the moon and stars hung like lamps in a sky of sapphire velvet, and the friendly races, Turki or Kirghiz, who added so greatly to the pleasure of my last experience of the Open Road.

PART II

CHAPTER XII

THE GEOGRAPHY, GOVERNMENT AND COMMERCE OF CHINESE TURKESTAN

Le Turkestan est pour les Chinois une position stratégique et un excellent débouché pour l'aristocratie mandarine qui ne trouve plus assez de places disponibles dans la vieille Chine. C'est tout simplement une bonne terre de pâture pour engraisser une portion notable du troupeau administrateur—GRENARD, *La Haute Asie*, ii. 273.

HSIN-CHIANG, or "the New Province," as the Chinese term it, includes the province now generally known as Chinese Turkestan, together with Urumchi and other districts situated to the north of the Tian Shan which lie outside the scope of this work. The province we are dealing with has had many names, such as Lesser Bokhara, Moghulistan, Tartary, High Tartary, Eastern Turkestan, the Six Cities and Kashgaria, the last four names having been in use until quite recently.

The country is a vast plain, measuring about 1000 miles from east to west and about half that distance from north to south. Its altitude is some 4000 feet in the west, and decreases steadily as it stretches eastwards, until at Turfan an area lying below sea-level is found. The physical boundaries are definite, being formed by some of the loftiest mountains in the world. To the north runs the Tian Shan; to

the west lies the Kizil Art, holding up the Pamirs, those elevated valleys of High Asia; on the south are the lofty Kara Koram and Kuen Lun ranges, the latter being the Kasia Mountains of Ptolemy, bounding Serindia, as he termed the province. The eastern boundary is the vast *Gobi* or "Desert," where Sir Francis Younghusband travelled for nearly one thousand miles without seeing a house.

The Takla Makan desert, distinct from the Gobi, occupies the centre of the country. From east to west this paralysing waste stretches for 500 miles, while its greatest breadth from north to south is half that distance. It is indeed a Land of Death, covered with monstrous sandhills, which overlie the ruins of great cities and dense forests and represent the triumph of the wind, combined with desiccation, over the patient industry of man. There are also smaller deserts, such as that lying between Merket and Kashgar, which we crossed on our journey.

Chinese Turkestan may be described as a desert, or series of deserts, fringed by oases forming a horse-shoe, with the toe pointing west. In Persia, except in the heart of the Lut, there are villages at intervals all over the country, depending mainly on the underground irrigation channels termed *kanats*, whereas in Chinese Turkestan, outside a few large oases, more fertile than any areas in Persia, the desert is of a more intense type, and rarely supports even a scanty covering of bushes such as are usually found in Persia. Indeed the desert, with its waves of sand advancing in regular lines and rising to the height of perhaps one hundred feet, is the most noticeable feature of the country, which is full of legends of the destruction through

THE TIAN SHAN OR CELESTIAL MOUNTAINS.

(Taken from the West on the Osh-Kashgar route.)

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this agency of many famous cities. The description of Hiuen Tsiang, the great Chinese traveller, is worth quoting: "These sands extend like a drifting flood for a great distance, piled up or scattered before the wind. There is no trace left behind by travellers, and often-times the way is lost, and so they wander hither and thither, quite bewildered, without any guide or direction. There is neither water nor herbage to be found, and hot winds frequently blow. When these winds rise, both man and beast become confused and forgetful, and there they remain perfectly disabled. At times, sad and plaintive notes are heard and piteous cries, so that between the sights and sounds of this desert men get confused and know not whither they go. Hence there are so many who perish on the journey. But it is all the work of demons and evil spirits." [1]

It has been calculated that the area of the oases is rather less than 1½ per cent of the whole, so that if the deserts were taken away we should have to deal with a very small stretch of habitable country. As it is, we see oases, generally separated by miles of desert, all producing wheat, barley and other essentials within their own limits, and therefore needing but little communication with their neighbours, from whom they want nothing and to whom they sell nothing. The result is a state of general well-being, unprogressive in character and tending to stagnation. The more one travels the more one realizes how the progress and prosperity of a country depend upon good communications and an abundant rainfall.

There is another point of view from which the

[1] *Si-Yu-Ki*, by S. Beal, ii. pp. 324, 325.

detached oases have affected the history of the region. They have never possessed enough resources to support a powerful army; but, owing to their isolation and proximity to the mountains, they were doomed to become the prey of every powerful force which swept down from the undefended frontier and took the cultivated areas in detail. The inhabitants have at no time displayed military virtues, and are to-day singularly unwarlike.

Of the rivers of the province, the Yarkand, known in its upper reaches as the Zarafshan, and lower down as the Tarim, is the most important. It frequently changes its course, and is perhaps responsible for the proverb, "A river, like a king, obeys no law." Its chief tributaries are the Ak Su from the north and the Khotan River from the south. The Kizil Su or "Red River," which flows through Kashgar, was also in past times a tributary of the Yarkand River, but it now fails to reach the main stream, for its water falls into the Lalmoi marsh below Maralbashi. Other rivers do not even approach the Zarafshan, but lose their waters in the sands.

It is a far cry from Egypt to Chinese Turkestan, but they are alike in this, that both countries depend absolutely and entirely on rivers for their life. As in Egypt, so in the basin of Chinese Turkestan, there is no rainfall which counts; everything therefore depends on a full river. The snowfall on the ranges affects the volume of water, which on the whole is decreasing. "The Land of Withering Rivers" is the appropriate title of a chapter dealing with this question in Huntington's *The Pulse of Asia.* Apart from this, a cold summer in the Pamirs, such

as occurred in 1915, may hinder the melting of the snows to such an extent that very little water reaches Maralbashi, below Kashgar, during the entire summer; and even in the Kashgar Oasis there was in that year a distinct deficiency of irrigation water.

The climate of Chinese Turkestan is intensely continental. The province is surrounded, as we have seen, by some of the highest ranges in the world; we therefore find extremes of heat and cold. Kashgar, where alone meteorological observations are taken, lies at an altitude of 4277 feet, and it might be thought that in consequence of this altitude, together with a latitude which is that of Central Spain, and the proximity of snow-covered ranges, the summer would be short and cool. Yet, mainly owing to the almost total absence of rainfall, the three summer months have a mean maximum of 90° with a mean minimum of 62°. On the other hand, the three winter months have a mean maximum of 38° with a mean minimum of 17°, but it is to be noted that, owing to the dryness, the cold is not severely felt. The scanty rainfall of only 3·34 inches is distributed over the whole year and is irregular. During the spring and summer of 1915 no rain fell in Kashgar beyond a few showers which were too light to record, but in the mountains the falls of snow and rain were frequent, especially in June.

The Kashgar Oasis certainly merits the epithet of "windy" during the spring. The storms blowing mainly from the west, or from the Takla Makan, are generally accompanied by clouds of dust which envelop the Oasis in a haze, and so prevalent is this condition that there are, as already mentioned, only one hundred clear days in the year. This

disagreeable phenomenon was noted by *Mirza* Haidar, who, in the early part of the sixteenth century, wrote: "But Kashgar has also many defects. For example, although the climate is very healthy, there are continual storms of dust and sand, and violent winds charged with black dust."[1]

The population of Chinese Turkestan is estimated at about one million and a half. It is almost entirely confined to the oases, chief of which are Kashgar with 300,000, Yangi Shahr with 200,000, Yarkand with 200,000, and Aksu and Khotan each with 190,000 inhabitants. The population may also be grouped into two main classes as "settled" and "nomadic," with a small semi-nomadic division. The nomads, together with the semi-nomads, do not aggregate more than 125,000 in all. They inhabit the cold highlands, moving about in summer and winter alike as their flocks exhaust the grazing, which is rich in summer and scanty at other seasons. The Kirghiz, who are the leading nomads, estimated to number 50,000, implicitly believe that their ancestor was a Kazak Prince, Saghyon Khan by name. According to the legend, his forty daughters were walking by a river one day when they remarked foam covering its surface. From curiosity they all dipped their fingers into the water, and thereby became pregnant, and the Kirghiz claim to be the descendants of these "Forty Maidens" or *Kirk Kiz*. This tradition evidently rests on a poor pun, but it proves that the Kirghiz regard themselves as a branch of the Kazaks, or "Cossacks," as we write the word. They furthermore believe that the same Prince had thirty sons, *Utuz Ughul*, whose descendants inhabit

[1] *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, p. 303.

the Alai and the country between it and the Ili province. In Chinese Turkestan the principal Kirghiz tribes inhabiting the uplands between Kashgar and the Taghdumbash Pamir are the Naiman, the Kapchak and the Tait. The Kirghiz are all Moslems of the Sunni sect.

The Dulanis, whom we met in the Merket Oasis below Yarkand, are another tribe of importance in the province. Their origin is called in question, but they are akin to the Kirghiz, although they differ in appearance owing to their sedentary life in a forest-covered country. Their name is said to have been given them by a *Khoja* monarch, who termed them his *dulan* or "two shoulders." They live in miserable shanties made of wood and are poor cultivators, relying more on their flocks than on the produce of their land.

The semi-nomads include the Taghliks or "Highlanders," who herd the flocks belonging to the sedentary population. They spend the summer in the mountains, but occupy huts or caves in the foot-hills during the winter; these "Highlanders" are all Sunni Moslems. On the other hand, the Mongols of Karashahr, who in numbers are about equal to the Kirghiz, are all Buddhists.

In addition to the tribes already mentioned, there is a strong colony of five thousand families of Tunganis, mainly immigrants from Central China, Kansu and Shensi. As Sunni Mohamedans converted in the early days of Islam they were hostile to the Chinese, and have rebelled more than once; but during the recent Revolution they changed their policy and supported the local authorities. In consequence they are now being given posts in the

government, and at the time of my visit the commander of the troops at Khotan was a Tungani.

To conclude this enumeration, the Tajiks, who are Aryans from Farghana, numbering 13,000, the Chinese 6000, the Indians 5000 and the Abdalis 1000, make up the population of Chinese Turkestan. The Abdalis claim kinship with the Abdalis of Khorasan or Herat, now the Durranis. They are locally believed to be the descendants of Yezid, the slayer of the *Imam* Husayn at Kerbela, and until the time of Yakub Beg's rule are said to have acted a play in which the Shias are reviled. Grenard,[1] who studied this mysterious people, came to the conclusion that they were the descendants of a Persian Shia colony, but Stein, whose authority is superior, believes that they are Gipsies.

The province of Hsin-Chiang is ruled by a *Chiang Chun*[2] or Provincial Governor, who resides at Urumchi. Under him are *Taoyin*, or Governors, of Urumchi, Tarbagtai, Ili, Aksu and Kashgar. The situation is complicated by the fact that the commander of the troops in the districts south of the Tian Shan is independent of the Governor of Urumchi, taking orders direct from Peking. Under the *Taoyin* of Kashgar, with which we are especially concerned, are *Hsien Yin*, or Sub-Governors, of Khotan, Yarkand and other districts; there are also officials appointed to deal with foreign affairs. The term *Amban* is applicable to all Chinese officials, and is used especially as a mark of respect. The above-mentioned officials, constituting the superior civil service, are all Chinese, but their subordinates,

[1] *La Haute Asie*, ii. 308.

[2] Most of these terms are new, the old titles having been abolished after the Revolution.

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known as *Begs*, *Ming Bashis* and *Yuz Bashis*, are usually Moslems. The *Begs* are the local landowners and are generally men of considerable influence, and to them is entrusted the collection of the taxes, the administration of justice so far as minor cases are concerned, and the arrangements for forced labour. The irrigation system is also in the hands of the *Begs*, whose subordinates are elected by the cultivators of the district.

The nomads are administered quite independently of the provincial governors, by an official generally known as the Ili Tartar General, who is the acknowledged head of the various tribal organisations. Their taxes are one-fifteenth of the crop in the case of those who are engaged in agriculture, and about the equivalent of three shillings per 100 sheep, or 10 horses, or 5 camels; cattle are not taxed.

The system sketched above, by which there are three independent authorities in the province, is bad enough; but it is made infinitely worse by the corruption which prevails, especially in the collection of the revenue. On the other hand, the taxes are generally light, and the condition of the people is one of acquiescence in Chinese domination.

The chief tax levied from the "settled" population is on land, which for this purpose is divided into "well-irrigated" and "white" land. The survey on which the revenue is raised was that fixed after the final expulsion of the Khokandis and Andijanis, when less than one-half of the land now cultivated was occupied. The tax is light, amounting to one-tenth for the good land and one-fortieth for the bad land. It is payable in grain; but, as the Chinese officials demand money, the *Begs* fix the rate

high and share the difference with their superiors. By this and other means the land tax is now increased to about one-fifth of the crop; but prices have risen considerably of late years, and when prices rule high the farmer makes money. Apart from the land tax revenue is raised from registration of sales of land, from *likin* or internal customs, and from taxes on wine, salt, mills, etc. Labour has also to be provided for public works and transport for the use of troops. For the assessment of this impost the unit of fifteen houses termed a *choka* is taken, and each *choka* provides a labourer and a cart; building material, if required, is partly paid for. Artisans, who are organized into guilds, are obliged, if required, to work for Government on five days in each month, and receive the equivalent of fourpence a day. In 1913 the revenue levied by the *Taoyin* of Kashgar was as follows:

	Taels.
Land Tax	570,000
Tax on registration of land sales	200,000
Tax on sale of live stock	250,000
Likin	180,000
Miscellaneous taxes on wine, salt, flour mills	100,000
Taels	1,400,000

This sum, with the tael reckoned at 2s. 8d., is equivalent to £186,666. The revenue is all ear-marked for local expenditure, 800,000 taels, or rather more than one-half of the entire amount, being absorbed by the inefficient army, which exists mainly on paper.

The administration of justice is fairly good, although bribery is not uncommon. As a rule, civil cases are tried by the *Kazis* and criminal cases by the *Begs*. The Chinese authorities merely supervise,

and prefer that all cases, whether criminal or civil, should be settled out of court. By Chinese law no punishment can be inflicted without confession of guilt, and torture is freely administered to secure this confession. Punishments include beating on the back of the thighs above the knees, and the *cangue*, a board two feet square and weighing thirty pounds, which is worn round the neck; and also imprisonment. Death sentences (which have to be confirmed at Urumchi) are carried out by hanging, strangling or beheading.

In this system as a whole, as in the administration of justice, the Chinese work as far as possible through the leading inhabitants, while retaining a general supervision. They are very greedy for money, but are acute enough to avoid causing too much discontent, and they remove any official who becomes unpopular. In short, although their system may be inefficient and aims at no improvements in administration or communications, it is believed that the natives, with their memory of Yakub Beg's tyranny, would not care to exchange their Chinese rulers for Moslems.

We come now to the trade of the province, concerning which my remarks refer mainly to the three cities of Kashgar, Yarkand and Khotan. Kashgar, the residence of the Governor, is not only the chief town, but the centre of Russian trade. Owing to its favoured position with regard to the railway at Andijan and the wealth of its rich oasis, the city is increasing in population, which is now estimated at 80,000. Land is rising in price and there is hardly a vacant house. Yarkand, with 70,000 inhabitants, is also rich and prosperous, but in a less marked

degree, and is the chief centre of the trade with India. Khotan, with a population of 50,000, is the centre of the manufacturing activity of the province, being celebrated for its jade, silk and carpets.

The mainstay of the export trade with India is the drug known as *charas* in India, prepared from the hemp which is planted round the fields of maize; raw silk is the next most valuable export. The chief articles of import from India are muslins, longcloths, and red cotton prints; while spices from Southern India are in great and increasing demand, and penetrate even to the western provinces of China. Surat brocades are imported for covering caps and for women's cloaks, and I have seen some good specimens of the beautiful cloth of gold.

In no part of Asia are communications more difficult. The route to India, *via* Leh, perhaps the highest and roughest trade route in the world, runs across range after range of stupendous mountains, culminating in the Kara Koram, which is crossed by a pass at the immense height of 18,550 feet. This track is open for not more than six months in the year, and the difficulties from storms, avalanches and flooded rivers are increased by the scantiness of the grazing, and for some six stages by the entire absence of villages. This trade with India *via* Leh is of small amount, showing a total value of about £200,000 for 1913.

By treaty Russo-Chinese trade *via* Irkeshtam or Narin is free of customs dues. Its value in 1913 was two and a half million roubles, or rather more than the British total at the pre-war rate of exchange, cotton tissues being the most important article. The Russian flowered prints with which the

natives are chiefly clothed—only the poorer classes wearing the dingy white native calico—are artistic, and make the crowds in the bazar delightfully picturesque. As may be supposed, the chief articles of export are raw materials, such as cotton, sheepskins, silk and wool; but there is also a considerable trade in the local white cloth, which is worn on both sides of the frontier, and in carpets.

The trade with Afghanistan is local and is mainly with the province of Badakshan, the imports being almonds, pistachio and gall-nuts, and the horses which were famous even in Marco Polo's day. Opium, too, is smuggled in considerable quantities; the *lapis lazuli* mines are not worked regularly, but occasional blocks are brought for sale. The Badakshani traders carry back Russian piece goods, carpets and the local white cloth. The route, which runs across the Wakhijir pass, is open during the summer only, and the pedlars—for those who use it are little more—must be a hardy race to withstand its rigours.

CHAPTER XIII

AN HISTORICAL SKETCH OF CHINESE TURKESTAN: THE EARLY PERIOD

L'histoire des Turcs occidentaux est comme la clef de voûte où convergent et se rencontrent pendant quelques années les histoires particulières de grandes nations qu'on regarde trop souvent comme isolées les unes des autres; elle nous rappelle que la continuité est la loi de l'univers et qu'il n'est pas d'anneau qu'on puisse ignorer dans la chaine infinie dont toutes les parties sont solidaires. — CHAVANNES, *Documents sur les Turcs Occidentaux.*

THE history of Chinese Turkestan presents the difficulty that until mediaeval times it filled but a small part on the stage of Asia. On the other hand, it lay on the highway of the nations, and migrations from the Far East to the West, which have so deeply influenced the history of mankind, generally traversed the Tarim basin, the country to the south being almost impracticable, and the country to the north presenting a longer and a more difficult line of advance. Holding firmly to the belief that history should be studied as a whole rather than in water-tight compartments, I have attempted in this sketch to give some account, not only of events affecting Chinese Turkestan but also of their connection with, and reaction upon, neighbouring states of Asia.

The earliest recorded connection of China with what is now the province of Chinese Turkestan is the

progress of Mon Wang, one of the emperors of the Chow Dynasty, to a province in the vicinity of the Kuen Lun mountains which may be identified with Khotan. This tour is alleged to have taken place about 1000 B.C., but is possibly legendary, and we reach firmer ground at the beginning of the third century B.C., when China, under the Han dynasty, became a world power. At this period the chief concern of the ruler was the powerful tribe of the Hiong-Nu or Huns, which occupied Mongolia. These ambitious nomads attacked the Yue-chi (known later as the Indo-Scythians) then inhabiting the north-west parts of Kansu, Kokonor and the southern half of the Gobi, and not only defeated but expelled their enemy, thereby setting in motion a series of human avalanches, with far-reaching consequences. The dispossessed Yue-chi crossed the desert to Kucha and, advancing to the Ili river, subsequently broke up into two divisions, the Little Yue-chi who moved into Tibet, and the Great Yue-chi who occupied the Ili valley and drove the Sakas from Kashgar in 163 B.C. But the Huns, some fifteen or twenty years later, followed up and again defeated the Yue-chi, and the latter, fleeing westwards and driving the Sakas before them, invaded Bactria and, in 120 B.C., destroyed its Greek dynasty. They then crossed the Hindu Kush and carved out an empire in India with Peshawar as their capital.

The wide outlook of the Han dynasty is demonstrated by the fact that, between 120 B.C. and 88 B.C., missions were despatched across Chinese Turkestan to distant Parthia, known in China as An-Sih, from the Chinese form of the name of the royal house of Arsaces. It is worthy of mention that Mithradates II.

of Parthia, who received the earliest of these missions, and thereby initiated an intercourse with China which was invariably peaceful, was also the first Parthian monarch to receive an embassy from Rome.

Wars with the Huns were a constant preoccupation of the Chinese until, in the first century B.C., they began to take most vigorous action in Chinese Turkestan. By 59 B.C. the entire province was conquered and a strong government was established. In 51 B.C. the nomads of Central Asia, exhausted by internecine strife, appealed to China, whose supremacy—so Chinese historians declare—was acknowledged in some form, however slight, from the province of Shensi to the Caspian Sea. Owing to the wide range of nomadic tribes the statement is not as fantastic as at first sight it would seem to be.

This vague authority was consolidated in the first century of our era by the famous warrior Pan Chao, who in the course of his earlier campaigns steadily annexed provinces and districts lying to the west of China. In A.D. 70 he defeated the ruler of Khotan, and six years later he conquered the entire province with which we are dealing. According to a local legend, on one occasion Pan Chao was besieged in Kashgar and access to the river was cut off, but the great general rose to the occasion and stamped on the ground, whereupon springs, still known as "the Springs of Pan Chao," gushed out and the army was saved.

In 88 the Yue-chi, who had assisted Pan Chao in a campaign against Turfan, sent a tribute of jewels and lions to China, and demanded a princess of the Han dynasty as a consort for their ruler; but this proceeding was viewed with disfavour by Pan Chao,

and he arrested the ambassadors. The Yue-chi, to avenge the insult, despatched an army estimated at 70,000 men across the Pamirs. Broken down by hardships, it was defeated with ease, and as the outcome of further negotiations the Yue-chi continued to pay tribute to China.

In 91 Pan Chao was appointed General-Protector, and according to the Chinese historian not only crossed the Pamirs, but conquered fifteen kingdoms lying between Kashgar and the Caspian Sea. Probably what occurred was that he received envoys from the various nomadic tribes, who agreed to recognize Chinese suzerainty; for it is unlikely that a Chinese army actually marched to the Caspian Sea.

In 97 Pan Chao despatched a certain Kan Ying on an embassy to visit Parthia and Rome; but the envoy, after safely reaching Ctesiphon, was deterred from the long voyage down the Persian Gulf, across the Indian Ocean, and up the Red Sea and the Gulf of Akaba to Aelana, by exaggerated reports that on the return journey, if the winds were adverse, the ocean might take two years to cross! According to the local belief, Pan Chao is buried inside the present city of Kashgar, on a high mound which is surmounted by an artistic temple and overlooks the springs already mentioned.

In time the power of the Celestials waned in Chinese Turkestan, and we learn from the annals of the later Hans that at the beginning of the second century A.D. the ruler of Su-le (as Kashgar was then termed) was forced to send as a hostage to the king of the Yue-chi at Peshawar one of his relatives, who was subsequently placed on the throne of Kashgar. This piece of history is corroborated by Hiuen Tsiang.

Under Kanishka, the most celebrated ruler of the Yue-chi, the tribe regained Kashgar about A.D. 125,[1] more than two centuries after their first seizure of the province—truly a remarkable cycle of conquest.

The Huns had recovered their strength at this period, and in 138, the Chinese Emperor sent a certain Chang Kien, with a suite numbering one hundred persons, to open up relations with the Yue-chi, whom he wished to enlist as allies. Chang Kien was unfortunately captured by the Huns and kept prisoner for ten years, after which he escaped with some of his followers and reached Farghana, where he was well treated. The Yue-chi had recently conquered Tokharistan, situated in the great bend of the Oxus, where the undaunted Chang Kien at last gained touch with them. As was to be expected, he found them unwilling to quit their new conquest in order to undertake a campaign in the interests of China. Chang Kien finally returned home with the two surviving members of his mission and drew up a valuable geographical and ethnographical memoir; he also introduced the vine into China. He will ever be famous in the annals of his country as the first Chinaman who "pierced the void."

The Yue-chi introduced Buddhism into China after the conversion of Kanishka to that faith; they also undoubtedly brought to India a knowledge of Chinese civilization, together with the peach and the pear tree. Moreover, they had intercourse with Rome both from India and from Central Asia, and in various ways played a distinguished rôle until

[1] There is considerable uncertainty about this date, which good authorities give as some decades earlier.

they finally succumbed before the onslaught of the White Huns.

About the same time that the Prince of Kashgar recognized the paramountcy of the Yue-chi the Uighur tribes in the Turfan and Hami districts revolted from China, and for five centuries Chinese control over the entire province was lost.

Buddhism reached Khotan and Kashgar from India and thence spread to China. In 399 the Chinese monk Fa-hien, "deploring the mutilated and imperfect state of the collection of the Books of Discipline," set off on a long and successful journey to India, and to him we owe the first detailed account of the province of Khotan, which was at this period an important centre of Buddhism.

In the middle of the fifth century, not long after the journey of Fa-hien, the reigning member of the Toba Wei dynasty of China despatched an envoy to Po-sz, as Persia was then termed. The Persian monarch sent a return mission with a gift of trained elephants, which the independent Prince of Khotan detained, but in the end released. In all, ten missions are recorded as passing between Northern China and Persia between 455 and 513; and reading between the lines we find clear indications that at this period there was considerable intercourse between China and Persia *via* Khotan.

In 509, envoys from Khotan presented themselves at the Chinese Court bearing tribute. In the annals they are described as follows: "The people are Buddhists, and their women are in society as amongst other nations. They braid the hair into long plaits, and wear pelisses and loose trousers. The people are very ceremonious and polite, and

curtsey on meeting, by bending one knee to the ground." Except that Buddhism has given place to Islam, this description, generally speaking, stands good at the present time.

The next great wave of invasion was that of the Juan Juan, a tribe newly appearing on the stage of Manchuria. Gathering Turks and Mongols to their banners, the Juan Juan destroyed the Hiong-Nu, who were probably weakened by emigrations westward, and about 460 swept across Chinese Turkestan like a devastating tornado, without making any attempt at permanent conquest. The Hoa or White Huns, a vassal tribe, subsequently threw off their allegiance to the Juan Juan and founded an empire on the ruins of that of the Yue-Chi, embracing most of Chinese Turkestan to the east, but having its centre in the middle Oxus, whence for many generations it seriously threatened the existence of the Persian Empire.

In the middle of the sixth century the empire of the "White Huns" in its turn succumbed to the attack of the Western Turks, the Tu-chueh of the Chinese, who were organized in a confederacy of ten tribes. From the centre of this new power, which lay in the rich valleys to the north of the Tian Shan, the Paramount Chiefs ruled over a vast empire, leaving the states subject to their sway to be governed by their hereditary rulers, under the control of Turkish collectors of tribute.

Such was the state of the province we are dealing with when the great traveller Hiuen Tsiang passed through the empire of the Western Turks in 630. His meeting with the Paramount Chief is described by his biographer. In that very year this chief was

assassinated. His death was a signal for the break-up of the confederacy of the ten tribes, and for Chinese Turkestan it was the end of a well-defined period.

A new epoch opened with the establishment of the Tang dynasty in China early in the seventh century, and during the reign of its founder the invasions of the Northern Turks made him in the first instance seek the help of the Western Turks. The Chinese dynasty, however, rapidly became strong, and the year 630 not only marked the downfall of the Western but also the subjugation of the Northern Turks, and China once again found herself in a position to recover her lost western provinces. With this end in view a Chinese army crossed the great desert in 640 and occupied Turfan, and later on Karashahr and Kucha. The King of Khotan, presumably alarmed by these successes, returned to his allegiance, the tradition of which had probably not been forgotten, and the annexation of the entire province to China was secured in 658 by a victory won on the banks of the Ili over the revolted Paramount Chief. By this final triumph the existence of the Western Turks as a power came to an end, and China succeeded to their vast empire, which extended southwards across the Hindu Kush to Kabul and westwards to the borders of Persia.

At this period Chinese Turkestan was known as the "Four Garrisons," the reference being to the forces stationed at Kucha, Khotan, Karashahr and Kashgar, because Chinese power was based on this quadrilateral. Not that it remained unchallenged; for the Tibetans seized the province in 670 and

retained possession of it until 692, when the Chinese reoccupied it in force.

The consolidation of Chinese dominion in the west opened the way for the almost simultaneous introduction of Christianity and Zoroastrianism into China and Chinese Turkestan. The first Nestorian missionary reached China with sacred books and images in 635; and Yule[1] shows how the Nestorian sees of China formed part of a wide-spreading ecclesiastical system controlled by the Patriarchal see in Persia. The recent discovery of Nestorian cemeteries west of the Issik Kul, with dates ranging from 858 to 1339, throws interesting light on the fact that Kashgar is shown as a Nestorian see in the middle of the thirteenth century. In 621, a few years before the introduction of Christianity, the first Fire Temple was erected in China, and we learn from Chavannes that the Zoroastrian cult existed at Kashgar, Khotan and Samarcand.

A new and bewildering factor had now to be reckoned with in the rise of Islam; for its conquering spirit, which so profoundly affected the Near and Middle East and Northern Africa, even approached the confines of the distant Chinese empire. Yezdigird III., the last Persian monarch of the Sasanian dynasty, implored China for aid against the invading Arabs, but received the reply that Persia was too distant for help to be sent. Subsequently a son of the hapless Sasanian took refuge with the Chinese, but his attempt to win back the throne of his ancestors failed utterly. In 655, three years after the murder of Yezdigird at Merv, the Arabs despatched an embassy to China and thus opened up direct

[1] *Cathay and the Way Thither*, vol. i. p. 101 (Cordier edition).

communication with the Celestial Empire, whose frontier officials must have watched their advance with apprehension.

The great Arab conqueror of Central Asia was Kutayba ibn Muslim, who made his headquarters at Merv, and, in a series of campaigns waged for a decade, subdued Bokhara, Samarcand and Farghana. About 715 he actually raided as far as Kashgar, described by the Arab historian as "a city near the Chinese frontier." A curious legend of this campaign has been preserved, according to which Kutayba swore to take possession of the soil of China, and the ruler enabled him to fulfil his oath by the gift of a load of soil to trample on, a bag of Chinese money to symbolize tribute, and four youths to be stamped with his seal. Two years later the Arabs and Tibetans, taking advantage of the rebellion of the Western Turks, again penetrated into the "Four Garrisons." This was the farthest east reached by the Arab armies, and the exploit is a signal proof of their marvellous initiative and warlike prowess.

Based on their garrison in Chinese Turkestan, the Chinese mainly devoted their energies to preventing the Tibetans from stretching out their hands to the Arabs through Gilgit and Yasin, in which districts the Celestials built forts; and we read of more than one campaign successfully conducted in these ice-bound highlands in pursuance of this policy. But the power of China in this distant province was short-lived. One of her generals, who had successfully conducted two campaigns to the south of the Hindu Kush, treacherously seized and put to death the tributary King of Tashkent. Under this king's son the country rose, the Arabs were called in, and the

Chinese, owing to the defection of their native allies, were annihilated. A few years later internal troubles broke out in China, and the Tibetans, taking full advantage of them, overran the province of Kansu and interrupted communications with the heart of the Empire. About this time, too, in 751, a Chinese army 30,000 strong was annihilated in the *Gobi*.

The deserted officials with consummate skill maintained Chinese authority for a whole generation after being thus cut off from China, as the Chinese traveller Wu Kung testifies. Returning home by way of the "Four Garrisons" after a long residence in India, he reached Kashgar in 786; and, remaining in the province for a considerable period, noted that everywhere he found Chinese governors. By 791, however, the Tibetans had destroyed this paper government, and their own, which took its place, and at one time even threatened their old allies the Arabs, lasted until, in turn, it was broken by the Uighurs. The complete disappearance of China from the scene marks the end of another period in the history of the province.

The Uighurs, whose ancestors claimed descent from the Huns, originally lived in north-west Mongolia and, when they were expelled by the Hakas from their homeland, two of their sections founded states in the eastern Tian Shan. A third section, with which we are more especially concerned, broke the power of the Tibetans about 860 and became the masters of Kashgar, although Khotan remained independent for some years. The rulers of this section of the Uighurs—known also as the Karluks or Karakhani—were termed the Ilak Khans, and the part they played on the stage of Central Asia

was important. The career of these Uighurs was chequered, as in 840 Karakoram, their capital, was captured by the Kirghiz and their Paramount Chief was killed. This led to the dispersal of the tribe but not to its downfall, as Bishbaligh, the modern Urumchi, was occupied about this period and remained one of their chief centres for many centuries. They held sway under the designation of the *Arslan* or "Lion" Khans for many generations, and in the notices of the various embassies exchanged with China there is evidence that a comparatively high stage of civilization was reached in the country. Indeed their culture influenced Central Asia more than that of any other race, the script of the Mongols being adopted from the Uighurs, who in their turn had learnt it from the Manichaeans, or perhaps from the Nestorians.

The remarkable growth of the Persian creed of Manichaeism in Central Asia is closely connected with the Uighurs, whose chief became a convert to this faith in the eighth century. Among the manuscripts discovered by Sir Aurel Stein in the course of his excavations is a book of their omens, which makes curious reading: "A gambler staked his son and his servants. He went away after having won the hazardous game. Without losing his son and his servants, he won again ninety stray sheep. His son and his attendants all rejoice. Know ye this. This is good." And again: "An old ox was being eaten by ants, by their gnawing around its body. It stands without being able to move. Know ye this. This is bad." Manichaeans took part in the Uighur embassy sent to China in 806 and their religion existed in Chinese Turkestan until the thirteenth century.

The movement in favour of conversion to Islam began in Chinese Turkestan in the middle of the tenth century of our era, Boghra[1] Khan, a scion of the Karluk stock, being the first convert. The legend, as given in the fantastic hagiology known as the *Tazkirat* or "Chronicles of Boghra," runs that the young Satok Boghra Khan, at the age of twelve, was secretly converted by a certain Abu Nasr, Samani. His stepfather, who was the reigning monarch, suspected this, and, in order to test his fidelity to the old religion, invited him to help in laying the foundation-stone of a new idol-temple. In despair the young prince sought the advice of Abu Nasr, who replied that, if he worked with the intention of building a mosque, he would obtain merit in the presence of Allah and be delivered from the evil designs of the infidels. Having escaped this danger, the young convert decided to make an end of his stepfather, and breaking into his apartment by night, he awoke him, being unwilling to kill a sleeping man. The monarch refused to accept Islam at the point of his nephew's sword, but upon the prayer of Satok the earth opened and swallowed up the infidel, whose fate resembled that of Korah. As the chronicle runs: "The earth devoured Harun Boghra Khan, and he was not."

Satok Boghra Khan enjoyed considerable power and captured Bokhara. His last campaign was undertaken against Turfan, where in 993 he fell ill and whence he was carried back, a dying man, to Kashgar. His son and successor, Hasan, is known to history

[1] Boghra signifies a male camel—names of animals being used by Turks as tribal names. It is an interesting form of totemism; *vide* "La Légende de Satok Boghra et l'histoire," *Journ. Asiat.*, Jan.-Fév. 1900, pp. 24 *et seq.*

as having ended the Samanid dynasty by the capture of Abdul Malik. In Chinese Turkestan he is still better known for having waged a desperate campaign with the "infidel" Prince of Khotan, whom he defeated; not, however, without first suffering a disaster, in which Ali Arslan, his nephew and the Kashgar champion, was killed. The body of the latter is buried on the field of battle at Ordam Padshah, to the east of Yangi Hissar, but his head is preserved at a shrine in the Dolat Bagh, near Kashgar. A few years later both Hasan and his brother were killed by the Princes of Khotan, but this province, after a series of campaigns lasting twenty-four years, was ultimately annexed to Kashgar. From this period what we now call Chinese Turkestan was definitely occupied by the Turks. *Turki* became the universal language; and Grenard aptly draws attention to the fact that the oldest Kashgar book which has reached us, and which dates from 1068, is written in a pure Turki dialect.

In 1125 a new dynasty made its appearance in the Tarim basin. Yelui Tashi, a near relation of the head of the Kara Khitai or Leao dynasty of China, realizing that his position in the homeland was hopeless in view of the military superiority of the Nuchens, who subsequently founded the Kin dynasty, decided in that year to seek his fortune elsewhere. Collecting a force in Shensi, he marched into the valley of the Tarim and annexed it, thereby ending the dynasty of the Ilak Khans. He next invaded Western Turkestan, upon which he imposed an annual tribute of 20,000 pieces of gold, and later he assumed the title of *Gur Khan* or "Universal Lord." He died in 1136. His successor, in alliance

with Atsiz of Khwarazm or Khiva, inflicted a crushing defeat on the great Seljuk, Sultan Sanjar, in 1141. The Seljuk losses were estimated at one hundred thousand, and the Kara Khitai temporarily occupied Merv and Nishapur.

It is of special interest, as illustrating the wide range of Sadi's travels, to note that the great Persian poet visited Kashgar at this period. He commences one of his stories as follows: "In a certain year Mohamed Khwarazm Shah, for some good reason, chose to make peace with Cathay. I entered the chief mosque of Kashgar and saw a boy with beauty of the most perfect symmetry," etc.

In 1200 the tables were turned on the *Gur Khan* by Mohamed of Khwarazm, who was joined by Guchluk son of the Naiman chief whose defeat by Chengiz is recounted in the next chapter. Escaping from the field, he arrived, after great privations, at the court of the *Gur Khan*, where he was treated kindly, received a daughter of the monarch in marriage, and was converted to Buddhism. But, with base ingratitude, he gradually collected a force of his tribesmen, and with Mohamed of Khwarazm and the Prince of Samarcand formed a plot against his benefactor. The nefarious scheme was successful, and by 1212 the *Gur Khan* was a prisoner, and the usurper ruled over the Tarim basin. During the few years of his power he persecuted the followers of Islam and massacred the *mullas* at Khotan, hanging their leader head downwards from a tree in front of the chief mosque. But the reign of this detestable traitor was short, and the avenger of the *Gur Khan* was at hand.

CHAPTER XIV

AN HISTORICAL SKETCH OF CHINESE TURKESTAN: THE MEDIAEVAL AND LATER PERIOD

Cascar constituted a Kingdom in former days, but now is subject to the Great Kaan. The people worship Mohamed. There are a good number of towns and villages, but the greatest and finest is Cascar itself. The inhabitants live by trade and handicrafts; they have beautiful gardens and vineyards, and fine estates, and grow a great deal of cotton. . . . There are in this country many Nestorian Christians, who have churches of their own.—MARCO POLO.

THE rise of the Mongols from the position of despised tributaries of the Kin dynasty to that of lords of Asia and Eastern Europe is among the greatest events in history. Chengiz Khan, the organizing genius who welded tribes, with their constant feuds, raids and petty wars, into a single vast, obedient army, was born in 1162. When a boy of thirteen he succeeded to the confederacy built up by his father Yissugay, and for many years he suffered the vicissitudes of fortune that were usual in those times and circumstances; among them being capture by his enemies. After these early difficulties, we hear of the youthful chieftain serving the Kin Emperor and attacking with success the Buyr Nur Tartars who had killed his father.

Among his allies were the Keraits, a Nestorian Christian tribe whose chief, Toghril, better known as

the Wang Khan, was probably the original subject of the stories associated with Prester John, the fabulous monarch renowned in mediaeval Europe. In 1199 the two chiefs attacked the powerful Naiman tribe of Christians which occupied the country to the north of the Tian Shan, but the campaign was unsuccessful owing to the treachery of the Kerait leader, who drew off his troops at a critical moment. Three years later Wang Khan actually attacked and worsted the Mongols, but this defeat was avenged by Chengiz, who surprised him by a night attack. Wang Khan fled to the Naiman, by whom he was put to death. The results of this encounter were important, since it gave Chengiz control of the southern part of the present province of Mongolia.

His next campaign was directed against the Naiman. The two forces met to the north of the Tian Shan, and the result was a decisive victory for Chengiz, who thereby subjugated the Naimans and their allies. The Naiman king was carried out of the battle mortally wounded, but his son Guchluk escaped to Chinese Turkestan and took refuge with the *Gur Khan*, whose hospitality he abused as mentioned in the previous chapter.

In 1218 Chengiz invaded Chinese Turkestan and detached a force of 20,000 men from the main body to attack Guchluk. The latter fled without attempting to fight for his throne, but was overtaken in the wilds of Badakshan and put to death. The Mongol general proclaimed freedom of worship, which was one of the few benefits conferred by these nomad rulers. Through their influence, too, the position of Moslem women was considerably raised in Central

Asia, where it is still relatively high. Later on commerce prospered, owing to the removal of the boundaries of states, and during the second half of the thirteenth century the illustrious Venetian, Marco Polo, traversed the province from the Pamirs to Kashgar, from that city to Yarkand and Khotan, and thence to China.

Chengiz Khan divided his dominions among his four sons. To Chagatai, his second son, was assigned Transoxiana as a centre with appanages in every direction: Eastern Turkestan, Ili, Tibet, Ladak, Badakshan, Afghanistan, Kashmir and Bokhara being all included in his wide spreading kingdom. Chagatai was a follower of Buddha, and his rule was both vigorous and tolerant. His capital was at Almaligh, near the modern Kulja, where he led a nomad's life remote from the great cities of Samarcand and Bokhara. He bestowed Eastern Turkestan on the Dughlat family, and its chiefs became hereditary rulers of the province. Early in the fourteenth century a permanent division was made, Moghulistan [1] being separated from Transoxiana. For the former kingdom a Mongol prince, Isan Bugha, was elected and set on the throne, which he occupied until his death in 1330. His successor, after an interval of anarchy, was his son Tughluk Timur, whose mother, while pregnant with him, had, on account of the jealousy of the head wife, been married to a nobleman and sent away from the Court. Owing to this it was not even known whether a son or a daughter had been born to the *Khan* until the head of the Dughlat tribe despatched a confidential

[1] This province generally signifies the country lying to the north of the Tian Shan, but, as used in the text, the term includes the whole of the eastern division of the *Khanate*.

servant, who ascertained the facts and brought back the youth, then sixteen years of age.

The Tarikh-i-Rashidi, the sole important literary work produced in Eastern Turkestan,[1] opens with the following sentence, which merits quotation: "One day, when Tughluk Timur Khan was feeding his dogs with swine's flesh, *Shaykh* Jamal-u-Din was brought into his presence. The *Khan* said to the *Shaykh*, 'Are you better than this dog or is the dog better than you?' The Shaykh replied, 'If I have faith I am the better of the two, but if I have no faith, this dog is better than I am.' The *Khan* was much impressed by these words, and a great love for Islam took possession of his heart." His conversion did not take place during the *Shaykh's* lifetime, but was accomplished by a *Maulana* or "Master," a small, weak man in appearance, who, when challenged, smote the Champion of the Infidels senseless. This seemingly miraculous blow resulted in 160,000 persons becoming Moslems, and by the end of the fourteenth century Islam had supplanted Buddhism generally throughout Eastern Turkestan.

Tughluk Timur's first capital was Aksu, but later he selected Kashgar, and his chief claim to distinction is his connection with the great Tamerlane. At this period the western division of Chagatai's kingdom, which was ruled by puppet *Khans*, had fallen into a state of anarchy. Tughluk Timur accordingly determined to annex it, and in 1360 crossed the frontier at the head of an army. The chief of the Barlas tribe was defeated and fled to Khorasan, but his nephew Timur, destined to become famous as

[1] The writer was *Mirza* Haider, Gurkhan, who wrote a history of his ancestors, and also graphically described the events in which he sometimes played a leading part.

Tamerlane, saved the situation by timely submission, and was received into favour.

On the death of Tughluk Timur in 1363 Tamerlane drove out his son, who died shortly afterwards, and the throne of Kashgar was usurped by Amir Kamar-u-Din, of the Dughlat tribe.

In 1375, hearing that Moghulistan was weakened by disorders, Tamerlane decided to invade it. In the chronicle known as the *Zafar Nama* an interesting account is given of this campaign. At the outset the weather was terribly severe: "No one ever yet saw so much snow; the world looked like a morsel in the snow's mouth." But Jahangir, the invader's eldest son, defeated the enemy, who had taken refuge in deep ravines. Kamar-u-Din escaped, but his wife and daughter were captured, and Tamerlane married the latter and ended the campaign with festivities. He invaded Moghulistan altogether five times, the valley of the Yulduz being the meeting-place of his armies, and Eastern Turkestan suffered terribly from these raids, in the course of which the country was laid waste.

In 1392 Kamar-u-Din died, and a son of Tughluk Timur, who had been leading a wandering life, hidden by his attendants, at first in the Pamirs, then in the Kuen Lun, and finally in the wild Lob Nor region, was set on the throne, and concluded a peace with Tamerlane.

Tamerlane's last projected campaign against China would have led across Moghulistan, and the *Khan* was much perturbed by orders to sow large tracts of land with corn and to collect thousands of head of cattle for the use of the army. But one day "they saw advancing rapidly a man mounted on a black

horse and clothed in white robes. The chamberlains ran up from every side to try to stop him in his course, but he did not slacken his speed till he came up to where the *Khan* was standing. Then he called out in a loud voice, 'Amir Timur is no more; he has died at Otrar!' Many horsemen were sent after him, but none could overtake him." The news announced in this dramatic fashion was confirmed forty-five days later. The "Scourge of God" had died on February 4, 1405, and the country was thereby saved from being eaten up by the vast armies which he would have led on this distant campaign.

It is interesting to note that in 1420 Amir Khudadad, the then ruler, entertained the embassy despatched by Shah Rukh, the celebrated successor of Tamerlane, to the Emperor of China. The outward route of the ambassadors ran by Samarcand and Tashkent and thence to the north of the Tian Shan by Yulduz to Turfan, the return route passing through Khotan and Kashgar. The autograph letters of Shah Rukh are still extant, and the description of the journey given by one of the envoys is delightfully vivid.

We learn a good deal about Eastern Turkestan during the early part of the sixteenth century through *Mirza* Haidar's description of the career of Sultan Said, whose service he entered. This ruler, unable to face the Uzbegs, whose power had become formidable, decided in 1514 to forsake Andijan and to attack Aba Bakr, of the Dughlat tribe, who ruled at Kashgar and Yarkand. The expedition was a complete success and re-established the Moghul dynasty, Aba Bakr being murdered while fleeing to Ladak. Sultan Said invaded Badak-

TAMERLANE.

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shan, Ladak and Kashmir during the next two decades, and died from the effects of the rarefication of the atmosphere on his way back from Ladak, near the celebrated Karakoram Pass. Rashid Khan, who gave his name to the history, succeeded to the throne and ruled for some years with much cruelty. After his death his sons divided their heritage, and the country relapsed into anarchy.

Under the later Chagatai Khans, Islam recovered from the set-back it had received from the invasions of Chengiz Khan and his immediate successors, thanks mainly to the influence of Bokhara and Samarcand, which had become important centres of Moslem learning. During the reign of Rashid Khan, the celebrated saint *Sayyid Khoja* Hasan, more generally known as *Makhdum-i-Azam* or "The Great Master," visited Kashgar from Samarcand and was received with extraordinary honours. The saint's sons settled at Kashgar, where their father had married a wife and had received rich estates, and gradually established a theocracy, laying upon the necks of the submissive, apathetic people a heavy yoke which they still bear. In course of time two parties were formed whose influence on the subsequent history of the country has been profound. The supporters of the elder son were termed *Ak Taulin* or "White Mountaineers," from the name of the range behind Artush, their headquarters, whereas the supporters of the younger were known as *Kara Taulin* or "Black Mountaineers," from the hills near Khan Arik. Both parties of *Khojas*, as they were termed, aimed at political supremacy and intrigued with any external power that appeared likely to favour their ambitions.

In 1603 the famous Portuguese monk Benedict Goez reached Yarkand and was honourably received by its ruler, to whose mother he had lent money at Kabul. The Prince repaid the debt in jade, which the traveller sold to great advantage during his onward journey.

We now come to the rise of the Zungars or Kalmuks, a Mongol race which then dwelt in Ili and the surrounding districts. Under Khan Haldan Bokosha, one of the outstanding figures of the period, their power stretched northwards to Siberia and southwards to Kucha, Karashahr and Kunya-Turfan; but Haldan rebelled against the Chinese and was decisively beaten.

His nephew and successor, Tse Wang Rabdan, ruled from Hami on the east to Khokand on the west, and, until his murder in 1727, was the most powerful of Zungarian rulers. The Torgut Mongols from fear of him fled to the banks of the Volga. Sir Henry Howorth gives an interesting account of the relations between Tse Wang and the Russians, from which it appears that Peter the Great, attracted by rumours of gold in Eastern Turkestan, despatched a body of 3000 men up the Irtish with Yarkand as their objective; but the Zungars assailed the column and forced it to retire.

To return to the *Khoja* family, its most celebrated member was Hidayat Ulla, known as *Hazrat Apak* or "His Highness the Presence," head of the *Ak Taulins*, who was regarded as a Prophet second only to Mohamed. Expelled from Kashgar he took refuge at Lhassa, where the Dalai Lama befriended him and advised him to seek the aid of the Zungars. In 1678 the latter seized Kashgar, which remained

in their power for many years, and *Hazrat Apak* ruled as the deputy of the *Khan*, paying tribute equivalent to £62,000 per annum. In his old age the saint retired from the world to end his days among his disciples.

Some years later internal disorders enabled Amursana, one of the Zungar chiefs, to declare himself and his tribe Chinese subjects, and to persuade other tribes to follow his example; he also induced Kashgar to tender allegiance to the Chinese. It was the policy of the Emperor Keen Lung to reconquer Ili and Eastern Turkestan for the Celestial Empire; and in 1755 he despatched an army 150,000 strong, which met with little resistance and enabled him to consolidate the allegiance tendered through Amursana, who was appointed Paramount Chief. The Zungar soon tired of Chinese rule and massacred a detachment of the Celestial forces; but the Chinese reoccupied Zungaria in 1757, and in the following year crushed the tribe. Kulja was founded on the site of the Zungarian capital, and the modern name of Hsin-Chiang or the "New Province" was formally bestowed on the reconquered countries.

The Chinese, realizing their numerical weakness, settled soldiers and landless men in the fertile districts of the "New Province," to which they also deported criminals and political prisoners, among the latter being Tunganis deported from Kansu and Shensi. Chinese rule was evidently less harsh than Russian; for in 1771 the Torgut Mongols to the number of 100,000 families fled back to the Ili valley from the banks of the Volga, as narrated in dramatic fashion by De Quincey.

The prestige of China after her splendid successes

was naturally very high and led to further acquisitions. First the Middle and then the Little Horde of Kirghiz, in spite of their connection with Russia, offered their submission; it was accepted, and the rulers of Khokand, Baltistan, and Badakshan followed suit.

The *Khans* of Central Asia were alarmed by this display of Chinese power, and formed a confederacy, headed by Ahmad Khan, the Amir of Afghanistan, who despatched an embassy to Peking to demand the surrender of Chinese Turkestan on the ground that it was inhabited by Moslems. Receiving an unsatisfactory reply, the Afghan Amir was careful not to attack the Chinese, but contented himself with holding Badakshan in force; and soon afterwards the confederacy broke up.

Chinese exactions both in taxation and in forced labour for the erection of cantonments now became very heavy, and many of the oppressed peasants fled to Andijan, where they formed a party of malcontents, who awaited their opportunity.

The first attempt to expel the Chinese was made in 1822 by Jahangir, the *Khoja*, who, supported by the Kirghiz, raided Kashgar, but was repulsed, and retreated to the country south of Issik Kul, where he defeated a Chinese expedition. In 1826 he again tried to win Kashgar, and this time with success. Enormous forces were organized for its recovery, and after a trial by champions, in which a Kalmuk archer defeated a Khokandian armed with a musket, the Chinese won the day, and Jahangir was captured and put to death. Confiscations and executions followed, and 12,000 Moslem families were deported to Ili and settled as serfs under the name of Tarantchis.

Forts, too, were built at all important centres and Chinese authority seemed to be stronger than ever. As a further precaution a blockade was declared against Khokand. The *Khan*, resenting this policy and using Yusuf, the brother of Jahangir, as a puppet, invaded the province in 1830, but was forced to return to defend his own country against an invasion from Bokhara.

In the following year the Chinese made peace with Khokand, bestowing valuable privileges on the *Khan*, including a yearly subsidy of £3600, in return for which he was pledged to prevent hostile expeditions; he was also granted entire control of his subjects in Chinese Turkestan, to be exercised through *Aksakals* or "Elders" of their own nationality. The term *Alti Shahr*, or "Six Cities," now began to be applied to the western part of the province, which was specially affected by the treaty.

In 1846, the result of the British operations against China and the weakness of that empire becoming known, the sons of Jahangir attempted another expedition, headed by Ishan Khan *Khoja*, known as *Katta Tura*, or "Great Lord," who was the moving spirit among the brothers. Kashgar was captured by treachery; but the tyranny of the victors alienated the province, and the Chinese garrison at Yarkand was strong enough to expel the motley gathering of Kirghiz and Khokandi adventurers, in whose wake some 20,000 families left their homes and crossed the Terek Dawan in mid-winter.

A decade later another attempt was made by Wali Khan *Khoja*, who occupied Kashgar in 1857 and massacred the Chinese. Surrounding himself with fanatical Khokandis, he ill-treated and oppressed the

population, enforcing five daily attendances at the mosques, by means of cruel punishments, and forbidding the time-honoured custom of plaiting the hair; he also barbarously murdered the German traveller Adolph Schlagintweit. Thanks to his unpopularity the Chinese army which attacked the usurper met with no resistance, and the Khoja fled back to Andijan, followed, it is said, by some fifteen thousand families. But probably all these numbers are exaggerated.

A new figure was now about to appear on the stage, through whose action Chinese Turkestan was opened up to Great Britain and Russia. We may therefore fitly end the second section of this historical sketch before describing the kingdom founded by Yakub Beg.

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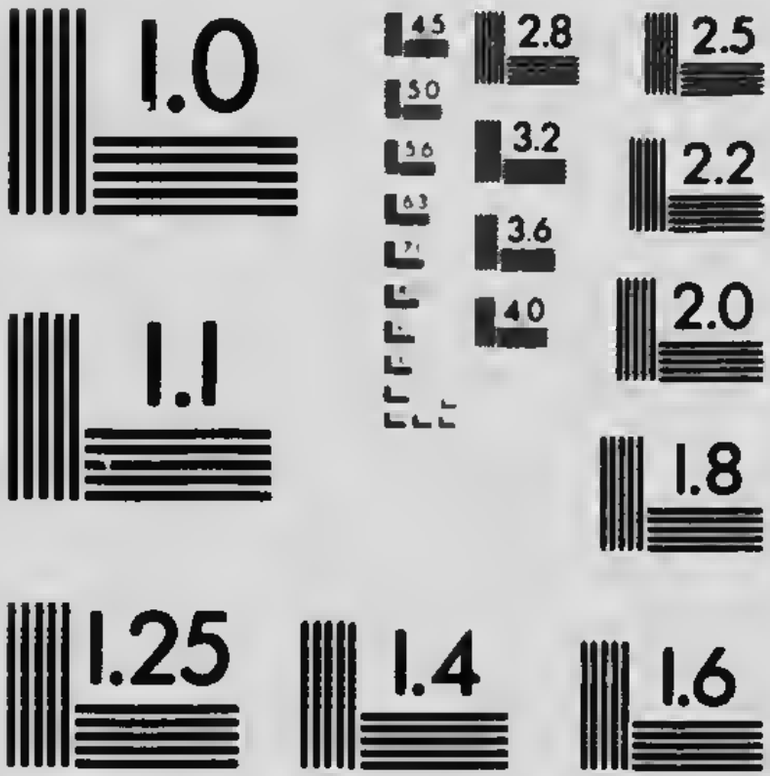

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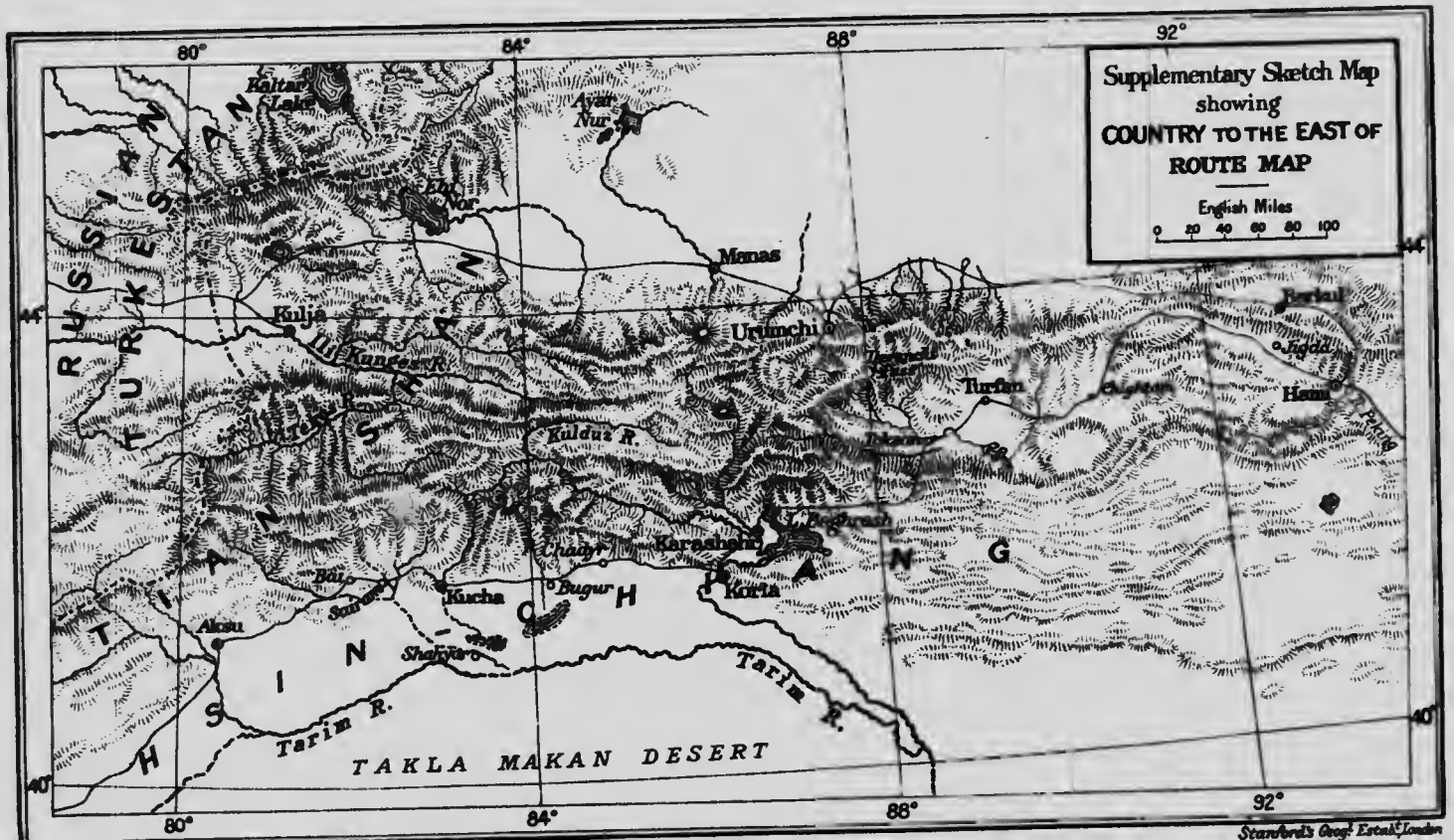
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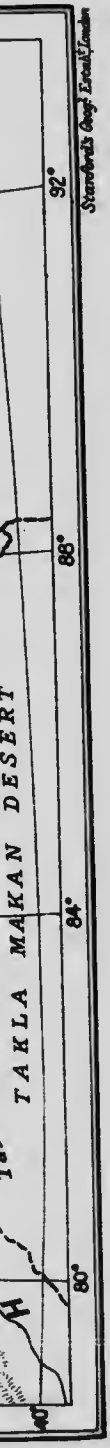

CHAPTER XV

AN HISTORICAL SKETCH OF CHINESE TURKESTAN: THE MODERN PERIOD

The soldiers of the *Atalik* in the Six Cities were many; gold-embroidered turbans and silk cloaks were the instruments of death for these dainty warriors.—*From a Kashgar Ballad.*

By way of introduction to this chapter some reference to the Khanates of Central Asia is called for. Half a century ago little or no accurate information on the subject was obtainable in England; for, although a brilliant band of British officers had penetrated to remote Bokhara and Khiva before the middle of the nineteenth century, the Khanates of the Sir Daria were beyond their ken.

With Russia it was otherwise. She was drawn forward mainly, perhaps, by the ambitions of her frontier officers but also by the desirability of controlling the raiders of the steppe. The Russian columns met with little serious opposition, being materially aided in their advance southwards by the Sir Daria, which not only provided drinking water, but to a certain extent helped to solve the difficult problems of supply and transport.

Russia reached the Sea of Aral and the mouth of the Sir Daria in 1847 and erected two forts, one in a harbour of that sea and the other at the mouth

of the river. This forward step brought her into hostile contact with the state of Khokand, whose rulers bitterly resented the appearance of the Northern Power in an area where they had hitherto been unchallenged. But Russia was not to be denied. In 1849 the advance up the great river was begun, the first outpost of Khokand being captured in that year; and four years later Ak Masjid, situated 220 miles up the Sir Daria, was taken. The Crimean War paralysed Russian activity for some years, but in 1865 Tashkent was captured and the territory lying between the Sea of Aral and the Issik Kul was formed into the frontier province of Turkestan.

Having very briefly traced the advance of Russia to this point, we turn to Khokand, where a movement originated which profoundly influenced Chinese Turkestan and the adjacent countries. At this point some account must be given of Yakub Beg, an adventurer destined to play a leading part on the stage of Chinese Turkestan. The future Amir was born near Tashkent in 1820, his father, who claimed to be descended from Tamerlane, being a *kazi* or judge. At the age of twenty-five we find Yakub Beg a chamberlain in the service of the youthful Khudayar Khan, who was placed on the throne of Khokand by the Kapchak chief, Mussalman Kuli. Yakub's sister married the Kapchak governor of Tashkent, and Yakub, mainly through his influence, was appointed Governor of Ak Masjid, which fort he stubbornly but unsuccessfully defended against the Russians. In 1858 Mussalman Kuli was barbarously executed by his ungrateful master, and the Kapchak and Kirghiz united to expel Khudayar in favour of his eldest brother, whom they set on the throne.

Yakub tendered his services to the new *Khan*, who was assassinated two years later, whereupon Khudayar returned to the throne and took Yakub into favour once again. But that treacherous official soon deserted Khudayar in favour of Shah Murad Khan, another claimant to the throne. He was ordered by his new master to hold Khojand, but being threatened by a Bokharan force he surrendered his charge and joined the invaders. Later, Yakub Beg fought the Russians before Tashkent in 1864, when General Chernaieff, after the fall of Chimkent, failed in his attempt to capture the city by a *coup de main*.

At this juncture the envoys of Sadik Beg, a Kirghiz chief, brought news of an anti-Chinese revolt in Kashgar and asked for a scion of the *Khoja* family to lead it. Buzurg Khan, last surviving son of Jahangir, who lived in Khokand, was accordingly approached. He readily embraced the opportunity and appointed Yakub Beg to command the tiny body of sixty followers which constituted his entire military force, the *Khan* of Khokand being naturally averse from parting with his soldiers in face of the imminent Russian menace.

The little party of adventurers crossed the Tian Shan in mid-winter without encountering any opposition, and in January 1865 reached the neighbourhood of Kashgar. Meanwhile Sadik Beg had repented of the invitation given to the *Khoja* prince, and pointed out that the Chinese were sure to reconquer Kashgar, where they would exact stern retribution. But Yakub Beg, moulded in the school of adversity, disregarded the warning and insisted on entering Kashgar, where Buzurg Khan was received with enthusiasm and proclaimed *Khan*. The new ruler,

who was cowardly, idle and dissolute, immediately became immersed in sensual pleasures, and Yakub Beg was left to deal with the difficulties of the situation, which were almost overwhelming.

In the first place Sadik Beg soon changed his attitude and, from being an ally, became an open enemy. Hostilities therefore commenced, which, mainly through the personal exertions of Yakub Beg, ended in the defeat of the Kirghiz chief, who fled to Tashkent.

Kashgar having been made fairly safe by this action, albeit the Chinese held the cantonment with a force 7000 strong, Yakub Beg decided to attack Yangi Hissar and Yarkand. He reached the latter city with a small force, leaving troops to invest Yangi Hissar; but the dominant *Khojas* were hostile to his pretensions and were strong enough to drive him back to Yangi Hissar. Nothing daunted, the indomitable adventurer, with the aid of reinforcements from Kashgar, pressed the siege of the Chinese cantonment at Yangi Hissar and finally captured and put to death its garrison of 2000 men. He followed up this success by enlisting the services of Sadik Beg, who had again appeared on the scene, and also of a force from Badakshan.

But his new allies were only half-hearted, and when he was attacked by a large force of Tunganis from Maralbashi he could only rely on his own followers. The action, which was fought outside Yangi Hissar, was nearly lost owing to the defection of the Kirghiz and Badakshanis, but Yakub Beg stood his ground firmly and won a well-earned victory, the immediate fruits of which included the submission of Yarkand.

The scene now shifts back to Kashgar, where the Chinese garrison surrendered and was enrolled in the army of Yakub Beg as "New Mussulman"; but the Amban, imitating the fine example of his colleague at Yarkand, blew up himself and his followers in the fort. Yakub Beg married the beautiful daughter of the Chinese general, and was much influenced by this wife, who bore him many children.

For a short time it seemed as if all would go well, but the Tunganis who had surrendered decided on a final bid for power at Yarkand and treacherously attacked Yakub Beg. Buzurg Khan, too, at this juncture deserted his general, whose position appeared desperate; but again Yakub Beg's remarkable courage saved the situation. He imposed his will on the Tunganis by attacking and capturing Yarkand; then, marching on Kashgar, he defeated Buzurg Khan, who had declared him a rebel. As a sequel to this victory Buzurg Khan was deposed and finally expelled, and Yakub Beg assumed the powers of his master. His position was recognized by the Amir of Bokhara, who in 1866 conferred upon him the title of *Atalik Ghazi* or the "Champion Father"; but, on the other hand, he had to reckon with the constant jealousy and hostility of neighbouring Khokand, which was continually inflamed by Russia. The capture of Khotan, which followed in 1867, ended his first successful period of action, during which, in spite of inadequate means, he had accomplished much.

While Yakub Beg was establishing his power in Kashgar, Yarkand and Khotan, his chances of success were being increased by events in the districts to the north of the range. The Taiping rebellion, which

raged from 1850 to 1864, had laid waste the richest provinces of China. In 1855, apart from this convulsion, a fierce Moslem insurrection broke out in Yunnan; and in 1862 there was a rebellion among the Moslems of Shensi and Kansu, which gradually spread across the desert to the Ili province, where the Tarantchis combined with the Tunganis against the Chinese authorities. This rebellion was successful, and Ili was seized in January 1866, when a Tungani-Tarantchi Government was formed, which remained in power until the occupation of the province by Russia in 1871.

We now turn to Yakub Beg's campaigns to the east of Kashgar. The Tunganis and *Khojas* of Aksu were not supported to any material extent from Ili, and he therefore had mainly to deal with an already defeated force when he commenced operations in 1867. Aksu, although naturally a strong position, offered but slight resistance, and the *Atalik* marched on to Kucha, which he also captured. After receiving the submission of Karashahr, Turfan, Hami, and Urumchi he returned in triumph to Kashgar. He subsequently annexed the upland district of Sarikol, carrying off its inhabitants and filling their place with Yarkandis and Kirghiz.

It is probable that Yakub Beg was induced to resume operations against the Tunganis as much by the difficulty of feeding and paying his army as by ambition. In the autumn of 1869 he passed farther east to Korla, which fell, and the series of campaigns was continued, generally with success, until 1873, the Kashgar troops penetrating as far east as Chightam, a small town to the east of Turfan. Little regard was paid to the wretched inhabitants, who were

plundered without mercy and sometimes massacred, in accordance with the usual practice in Central Asia. The *Atalik* thus achieved military success, but he failed to organize his conquests against the day when the slow-moving Chinese Government should attempt to regain its lost provinces. On the other hand, he probably could not control his troops, who would have deserted had looting been forbidden. In any case his constant military successes produced a great impression in the neighbouring states and spread his fame far and wide.

Yakub Beg's power was based on a mercenary force which was remarkable for its heterogeneous composition. Just as his palace, which was built and organized on the lines of barracks, was full of cannon of every description, ranging from ancient Chinese pieces to modern artillery, so his army included men from every neighbouring province. The most trustworthy and efficient soldiers were Khokandis, who, being strangers in the land, would naturally be loyal to their chief and fellow-countryman, whereas the local peasantry made indifferent fighters. An element numerically important, but for the most part of untrustworthy quality, was the Tunganis, who served mainly from fear. There were also a number of Indian and Afghan adventurers, some of the former being deserters from the Indian army. The Chinese troops were never used for distant campaigns.

The men above mentioned, who constituted the regular troops, were divided into mounted infantry, artillery and infantry, the force being increased by levies of Kirghiz, Dulanis and other irregulars of doubtful military value. It is now believed that

Yakub Beg had never more than 20,000 trustworthy men in his service, although exaggerated accounts of his strength were generally credited. His troops, owing to his somewhat remarkable personality and many victories, were of better fighting value than those of Khokand and Bokhara; but, as the event proved, they were unable to cope with Chinese troops trained on European lines, nor would they have withstood equal numbers of Russian troops.

His government was based on the Moslem law, and was very onerous. It must be recollected that he maintained a court and a large army, mainly at the expense of perhaps a million poverty-stricken peasants, who, in addition to paying the heavy taxes of nominally one-tenth of all produce, were ground down by the unjust tax-collectors until their condition was pitiable. Moreover, he kept a huge body of town police and also a large force of secret police, whose united activities must have added considerably to the general misery. The fact that he was a strong ruler implied the imposition of heavier burdens on his unhappy subjects. Moreover, during the period of his rule, trade with China entirely ceased, to the great loss of the merchants, who had but little commercial intercourse with Russia or India.

The relations of Yakub Beg with Russia were of primary importance to him until the Celestial army re-entered Chinese Turkestan, and it is consequently desirable to summarize them briefly. The *Atalik's* defence of Ak Masjid and his action before Tashkent have already been mentioned and were not forgotten by the Russians, who in 1866 dismembered Khokand and defeated Bokhara. The establishment of his power at Kashgar caused the Russians much anxiety,

and their frontier officials were at first instructed not to recognize Yakub Beg, but, at the same time, to be conciliatory, in the illusive hope that this line of action would induce the *Atalik* to make overtures.

In pursuance of this fatuous policy the Russians requested sanction to bridge the river Narin and to construct a road to Kashgar; but, needless to say, these concessions were categorically refused. By way of marking their displeasure the Muscovites began to construct a strong fort at Narin; but their hands were tied by attempts on the part of the Central Asian *Khanates* to throw off their hated domination. Yakub Beg, openly at any rate, preserved neutrality, and for five years the struggle continued, with the result that the Russian yoke was riveted more firmly than before on Khokand and Bokhara. To these preoccupations the *Atalik* probably owed his safety for the time being, as the construction of Fort Narin was avowedly intended as a preliminary to an attack on Kashgar, and it appears that an expedition destined for that task in 1870 was at the last hour diverted against Khokand, which unexpectedly revolted.

Later on the Russian authorities exchanged their somewhat menacing policy for one of peaceful penetration and attempted to gain an entry into Chinese Turkestan through their merchants. They also sent a young officer to discuss various questions with Yakub Beg, who in turn despatched one of his nephews to Russia. As, however, his envoy was accorded no official recognition, little progress was made in developing relations, and the *Atalik* maintained towards his formidable rival an uncompromising attitude, which convinced the Russians that his power was much greater than was actually the case.

Accordingly, in 1872, although military preparations were continued, an accredited envoy, Baron Kaulbars, was entrusted with the difficult task of opening up official relations with the *Atalik*. He was received by the gratified ruler with the extravagant expression of Oriental hyperbole: "Sit on my knees, on my bosom, or where you like, for you are guests sent to me from heaven." For the first time complete freedom was accorded to the envoy, and two Russian merchants who accompanied the mission were granted every facility for visiting Yarkand and Khotan. Baron Kaulbars was so fully impressed with a sense of the power of his host that he regarded him as a potentate ranking with the Amir of Afghanistan; and, owing to these impressions, a treaty of commerce, satisfactory to both parties, was drawn up, Russian goods being subjected to a maximum charge of 2½ per cent *ad valorem*. The envoy, who had learnt a good deal about the country and had certainly scored a great personal success, returned to Tashkent with glowing accounts of the *Atalik* and his dominions.

Another nephew of Yakub Beg's, *Haji* Tora by name, who had travelled widely, was next despatched to Russia, where he was received with much honour and entertained by the Tsar. From the court of the Northern Power he went on to visit Constantinople, where he conducted negotiations by which Yakub Beg, in return for an acknowledgment of his independence, accepted the suzerainty of the Sultan and issued coins bearing his effigy. Furthermore, as a mark of high favour, the *Atalik* was gazetted an *Amir*, with the title of *Amin-ul-Muminin* or "The Trusted One of the Believers."

The Russian authorities in Central Asia naturally

took umbrage at an alliance which united a leading Moslem power with their hereditary foe. Moreover, relations with Yakub Beg were not developing smoothly; for, realizing that his state would be overrun by Russian merchants, the Amir decided to go back on the spirit of the treaty of commerce and to discourage all Russian intruders. In the case of the first important caravan to reach Kashgar, he kept the owners under surveillance although he purchased their goods at a fair rate through one of his agents. But, as the payment was made in debased coinage the merchant stood to lose, and finally did lose, in spite of strenuous official Russian support. A year later Yakub again changed his mind and invited another Russian merchant to visit Kashgar. He received better treatment, with the result that trade gradually increased. The chief aim of Russia was to be permitted to appoint an Agent at Kashgar, whereas Yakub Beg would only allow a *Caravanbashi* or Superintendent of caravans (a man of little standing or education) to reside at the capital. In 1874 a Russian official was sent to arrange this question, but Yakub Beg, relying on the support of Great Britain, was entirely unyielding on the subject; indeed, his attitude towards Russia became almost menacing. So much was this the case that in the autumn of the same year the Russian authorities decided to break his power. They had massed twenty thousand troops on the frontiers, when a revolt in Khokand forced General Kaufmann to divert his forces. Had Yakub Beg been a great man he would have seized the opportunity to aid Khokand, and would thereby, in all probability, have given a serious set-back to the Power which had resolved on

his destruction. His inaction on this occasion stamps him as an Oriental adventurer who kept the kingdom he had won rather by good fortune than by signal capacity.

The relations of Yakub Beg with the Indian Empire were of little permanent importance from the political point of view, but are of considerable interest to the geographer and to the student of politics and commerce. In the middle of the nineteenth century the British representative in Ladak heard vague accounts of affairs in Chinese Tartary, as it was then termed, from merchants, but gained little or no accurate information, although the veil was lifted somewhat in 1857 by Adolph Schlagintweit, the first European to travel from India to Yarkand and Kashgar. Unfortunately for him, Wali Khan was besieging the Chinese cantonment of Kashgar at that time, and by his orders the German explorer was murdered. Eight years later, in 1865, Johnson,[1] an English surveyor, crossed the Kuen Lun to Khotan, where he was received with much hospitality by its chief; but to Robert Shaw belongs the credit of being the first Englishman to explore this unknown land and open up relations with its ruler and people.

While he was living at Ladak an agent of Yakub Beg passed through, bound for the Punjab, under orders from his master to report on the neighbouring land. Shaw mentioned to this agent his intense desire to visit Yarkand and Kashgar for the purpose of paying his respects to its celebrated ruler. This proposal was almost immediately agreed to, and late in 1868 Shaw crossed the Kara Koram and reached Yarkand safely. His courage and resolution were

[1] "Journey to Ilchi Khotan (1866)," *J.R.G.S.* vol. 37 (1867).

evidently combined with considerable tact, as throughout his journey he created an excellent impression both on Yakub Beg and on his officials. The inopportune arrival of another Englishman, Hayward, who was an explorer and also a trader, aroused suspicions in the mind of the Oriental, and both men were treated for a while as honoured state prisoners; but in the end they were sent back to Ladak, thoroughly pleased with their reception.

Shaw's reports excited intense interest, and created exaggerated ideas both as to the power of Yakub Beg and as to the richness of the prospective market. He had suggested to the *Atalik* the appointment of an agent for Chinese Turkestan at Lahore. This suggestion was accepted, and the agent was the bearer of a cordial invitation to the Government of India to despatch an official for the purpose of establishing friendly relations and opening up trade.

Forsyth, a capable Indian civilian, was appointed to carry out this mission, and, accompanied by Shaw, he reached Yarkand in 1870; but unfortunately the *Atalik* had just started off to his distant eastern frontier, and Forsyth returned to India without accomplishing his object.

Yakub Beg was as much disappointed as the British envoy at this fiasco, and through the insistence of his agent Forsyth was again appointed in 1873 to head a mission, which was of greater size than its predecessor. Under him were Lieut.-Colonel Gordon, Captain Chapman and Captain Trotter, who have all had distinguished careers. The caravan, consisting of 400 animals, required elaborate supply preparations, and great difficulty was experienced in crossing one of the passes, the last hundred

feet of which was a wall of ice. But in due course Kargalik was reached, and thenceforward the mission was treated with friendliness and sumptuous hospitality. In December 1873 the party reached Kashgar, and Forsyth describes his reception as follows:

"According to etiquette we dismounted at about forty paces from the gateway, and walked slowly along with the Head Chamberlain going ahead. In the outer gateway soldiers were seated on a daïs with their firearms laid on the ground before them, their arms folded and their eyes on the ground. We then passed through a second gateway filled with soldiers, and crossed another court, on all sides of which soldiers in gay costumes were ranged seated. From this court we passed into the penetralia, a small court in which not a soul was visible, and everywhere a deathlike silence prevailed. At the further end of this court was a long hall, with several window-doors. The Chamberlain then led us in single file, with measured tread, to some steps at the side of the hall, and entering almost on tiptoe looked in, and returning, beckoned with his hand to me to advance alone. As I approached the door he made a sign for me to enter, and immediately withdrew. I found myself standing at the threshold of a very common-looking room; looking about I saw enter at a doorway on the opposite side a tall stout man, plainly dressed. He beckoned with his hand, and I advanced, thinking it must be a chamberlain who was to conduct me to 'The Presence.' Instinctively, however, I made a bow as I advanced, and soon found myself taken by both hands and saluted with the usual form of politeness, and I knew that I was standing before the far-famed ruler of Eastern Turkestan."

This interesting description shows that Forsyth took Yakub Beg very much at his own valuation, and the fact that the British envoy agreed to dismount at a distance from the gateway must, at any rate, have raised the *Atalik* in the eyes of his subjects.

At the formal interview a few days later the gifts, consisting mainly of munitions, were presented, but Yakub Beg was chiefly pleased with the autograph letter from Her Majesty, which was enclosed in a magnificent casket. After exclaiming "Praise to Allah!" several times he proceeded to declare his friendship for the British, referring to the Queen as the sun "in whose genial rays such poor people as I flourish."

The mission remained four months at Kashgar, its labours culminating in a treaty of commerce which was concluded in February 1874. By its terms a 2½ per cent *ad valorem* tax was to be levied on goods imported from India, British trade thus being placed on the same favourable footing as Russian.[1]

In addition to important surveys made along the main road, Gordon led a party to the Pamirs, which were explored to some extent. Indeed the Forsyth mission was a distinct success, if only because these surveys proved beyond doubt that India could not be seriously invaded from the Pamirs or from Chinese Turkestan. Moreover, it enlarged the horizon of the authorities in India, and by the establishment of friendly relations with Chinese Turkestan inaugurated a small but profitable trade.

Yakub Beg, however, regarded the mission far

[1] The text of the treaty is given in *The Life of Yakub Beg*, by D. C. Boulger.

otherwise, as to him it signified an alliance, granting British protection against Russian hostility, and, had he retained his power, constant appeals for aid would have been received at Calcutta. As matters turned out, both Yakub Beg and his family were destined to disappear from the stage of Central Asia, and that speedily.

While the *Atalik* was entertaining the Forsyth mission the Chinese Government, having restored order at home, was preparing a formidable force for the reconquest of its lost possessions beyond the Gobi. The task was very difficult, owing to the width of the desert, estimated at about 1200 miles, but the Chinese army was well disciplined, well equipped, and well led, the difficulty as to supplies being successfully overcome in a very simple manner. The advanced guard sowed crops in one of the rare oases, and an abundant harvest was thus provided in the following autumn.

As soon as this was gathered in, an army 50,000 strong advanced without encountering any serious opposition, until in the spring of 1876 it reached the neighbourhood of Urumchi. The capture of this town in August, followed by that of Manas, fully re-established Chinese authority to the north of the Tian Shan.

The Celestials were now free to deal with Yakub Beg, whose position had become unenviable. His refusal to aid Khokand in her last desperate struggle with Russia must have lowered his prestige, while his hostility to that power must have weakened his position; it was clear, too, that Great Britain had no intention of supporting him with troops or money. Apart from this, his heterogeneous force was no match

for the veteran Chinese army, to which, moreover, it was far inferior in numbers and equipment.

In the spring of 1877 the Chinese main force marched on Turfan, crossing the Tian Shan by the Devanchi Pass; while a second force, 10,000 strong, moved west from Hami in co-operation. Yakub Beg had placed his main body for the defence of the Devanchi Pass, but while it was holding this position news was received of the capture of Turfan by the Hami column. A panic ensued, and, although the *Atalik* fought a rearguard action to the west of Turfan, he was obliged to retreat to Karashahr, and later to Korla. Before this defeat Yakub Beg had sought aid from Russia, but in vain, partly because Kuropatkin (then a captain) had visited his camp and reported most unfavourably on his position.

For some unexplained reason, probably from lack of supplies, the Chinese army remained immobile for several months, while events were moving fast in the enemy camp, where the star of Yakub Beg was setting in gloom. After losing the eastern part of his territory the *Atalik* became morose and a danger to his courtiers. According to trustworthy information gained by me in Kashgar, the actual cause that led up to his death was a savage flogging, inflicted without any adequate reason, on one of his officials. This alarmed Niaz Hakim Beg, one of his principal followers, who poisoned him

Thus died Yakub Beg, who for a period of twelve years had played a leading rôle on the stage of Central Asia. He was fortunate, as one of his titles of *Bedolat* signified, inasmuch as he quitted Khokand just before its fall and successfully founded a state only a few marches off. He was fortunate in his dealings with

Russia, which would have crushed him, but for more serious tasks which stayed her hand, and finally he was fortunate in being killed just as his kingdom was falling from his grasp. Among the chiefs of Central Asia he was a man of capacity, and he was undoubtedly brave and resolute; but his outlook was narrow, as was inevitable from his environment. He remained alert and virile to the end, and was not addicted to the vice or self-indulgence that ruins many members of the upper classes in Central Asia. Although the stage he trod was circumscribed, Yakub Beg is the only Moslem of the nineteenth century in Central Asia whose name will live.

The death of the *Atalik* was followed by a period of confusion. One of his sons escorted his father's corpse to Kashgar. There he was murdered by his elder brother Beg Kuli Beg, who succeeded to the throne, but not unchallenged, as a certain Hakim Khan Torah was able to seize Karashahr and Korla, and there were also outbreaks at Khotan. The new ruler in the end overcame his rivals, but in the effort exhausted his resources to a dangerous extent and made the way still easier for the Chinese.

The final operations for the recovery of Kashgar and Yarkand were conducted on somewhat the same lines as the first. The main force assembled to the north of the Tian Shan and, using a little-known pass, descended in overwhelming strength on Aksu, while a second column drove the Moslems before it to Karashahr and on to Kucha, where a hard-fought battle was won by the Chinese; and in December 1877 the campaign was brought to a successful conclusion by the capture of Kashgar.

The Celestials showed moderation in the hour of

victory. They deprived the population of their horses, to prevent a fresh rising, but they appointed Moslem headmen and also recognized the religious law of Islam. Their strong position was acknowledged by Russia in 1881, when, by the Treaty of St. Petersburg, that Power restored Kulja to the Chinese, receiving in return the post of Irkeshtam, two stages on the eastern side of the Tian Shan. By the same treaty freedom of trade was secured, and this agreement is still in force.

In the last two decades of the nineteenth century great forward strides were made in the direction of Chinese Turkestan both by Great Britain and by Russia. The former Power, thanks to the energy and activity of Younghusband (a nephew of Robert Shaw) and other travellers, realized the importance of exploring the passes through which India could be threatened, if not invaded, from Russian Turkestan. A second aim was the control of the No Man's Land which lay between the fertile valley of Kashmir and the plain of Chinese Turkestan. To this end British Political officers were stationed at Gilgit and Chitral, supported by the Imperial Service troops of the Maharaja of Kashmir.

During this period Russia also displayed considerable activity in the exploration and occupation of the No Man's Land bordering on Russian Turkestan. One of her most active agents, Captain Grombchevsky, visited the hill state of Hunza in 1888, meeting Younghusband in the following year on the upper reaches of the Yarkand River. In 1891 Younghusband travelled in Wakhan, and at the stage of Bozai Gumbaz met Colonel Yonoff, who had issued a proclamation that the Pamirs (with the

sole exception of the Taghdumbash Pamir) were Russian territory. That officer subsequently received instructions to escort Younghusband back to Chinese territory. He showed good feeling about his disagreeable task, and as Younghusband agreed, under protest, to proceed to Chinese Turkestan, he waived the instructions relating to escort. Upon this incident being reported, the Russian Government apologized for Yonoff's act, and the two Powers finally decided to despatch a commission to settle their respective claims in a country visited hitherto merely by a few travellers. In 1895 the commission met, and by its findings the narrow strip of Wakhan was awarded to the Amir of Afghanistan, with the result that the boundary of the British Empire was drawn in this section some thirty miles to the north of the crest line of the Hindu Kush.

The great revolution which had broken out in China in 1911 began to make itself felt in its remote western provinces in the following spring. The first outbreak occurred in the district of Ili, where a young officer entered into a conspiracy against the Tartar general, with whom he had a private quarrel. The conspiracy was entirely successful, and resulted not only in the murder of the general, but in the capture of the machinery of government. As the revolution progressed in China, the republic was proclaimed in Ili, and after the defeat of a force despatched from Urumchi the Ili rebels became undisputed rulers of the surrounding country.

The unrest soon affected Urumchi itself, where Chinese rowdies, members of a secret society which existed for the sake of loot and blackmail, began to demonstrate in favour of the republican cause

and to show their sympathy by acts of robbery and incendiarism. The governor, however, was no weakling, and realizing that the loyalty of the regular troops was very doubtful, he enlisted Tunganis in considerable numbers, through whose instrumentality he was able to control the situation for a time. Subsequently he dealt so mercilessly with every one suspected of being a member of the secret society, slowly slicing to death innocent and guilty alike, that the Chinese population rose and drove him out of Urumchi.

In April of this year the outward calm hitherto maintained in Kashgar was rudely disturbed by the murder of the *Taotai* and the Prefect of Aksu. Upon the arrival of the telegram announcing this deed, the Kashgar *Taotai* immediately cut off his queue and issued a proclamation advising the Chinese to follow his example. Moreover, he had a scroll prepared with the inscription, "Long live the Chinese Republic!" which he hung up in his yamen. After some hesitation the leading Chinese officials followed the example of the governor, the commander-in-chief of the province not only cutting off his queue and flying the flag of the Republic, but donning a nondescript European cap. The united officials then solemnly changed their chronological system from the fourth year of Hsuang-tang, the boy-emperor, to the first year of the Chinese Republic, an act which possessed tremendous significance in their eyes. The soldiers were by no means ready to follow the lead of their superior officers, but maintained a sullen and resentful attitude, which boded ill for the safety of the higher officials, military and civil alike.

Meanwhile Yuan-Shih-Kai had been informed by

telegram of the adherence of the New Dominion to the Republic and had appointed the governor of Kashgar to Urumchi, hoping by this means to end the state of hostility which still existed between Ili and Urumchi. The governor of Kashgar at first refused the appointment, pleading his age and weak health, but in the end accepted it. The actual position, therefore, was that the Republic had been acknowledged throughout the province, and that the Chinese officials were all obeying the instructions of Yuan-Shih-Kai. It might have been supposed that the crisis had passed without bloodshed, but this was not so. At night a band of fifty Chinese, members of a secret society, forced their way into the yamens of the governor and of the city magistrate. The governor, who was awake, was greeted with the ironical exclamation, "Greetings to Your Excellency," and both he and his wife were cut to pieces. The magistrate was also killed and the republican flags in the two yamens were cut down and destroyed.

In the morning the gamblers, as they were termed, were harangued by the commander of the garrison at the head of a few soldiers. They insisted on being armed and formed into a new regiment under the command of a ruffian, a pork-butcher by trade; and when this was done they appointed new officials to succeed the murdered men. The soldiers in the New City killed two of their officers and a panic ensued in Kashgar, but the disturbances and looting were confined to the New City. The administration was now controlled by the gang of gamblers, who appointed all officials and took advantage of their power to levy blackmail, mainly on Chinese officials. In the other centres there were murders. The gover-

nor of Yarkand, among others, was singled out for assassination; but an exceptionally violent storm, which turned day into night, suggested to the Chinese gamblers that heaven forbade the deed—and the official still lives to tell the tale.

In consequence of the unrest and lack of security caused by these deeds of violence, the Russian Government despatched a force 800 strong to protect Russian subjects. For some weeks after its arrival there was no friction or cause of alarm, but the celebration of a Chinese rite nearly gave rise to most serious consequences. On the day of the Festival of the Departed Spirits it is the custom of the Chinese to burn paper-money before the temples in order to ensure financial ease for their deceased relatives. One of the temples in Kashgar was the scene of this ceremonial, and a rumour reached the Russian consulate that the bazar was on fire. Help was immediately despatched in the shape of fifteen Cossacks, who, misunderstanding the situation, forcibly put out the fires in which the paper-money was being burnt. While this was being done some of the Cossack horses broke loose and galloped back to the consulate, where considerable anxiety was felt. The city gate was shut at the usual hour of 8 P.M., and, upon its arrival, the Russian main body, under the impression that their detachment had been cut off, blew it up with dynamite, and marching through the opening found the Cossacks perfectly safe.

Not long after this the "Gambler" regiment was ordered to Urumchi, and the officer commanding the Cossacks, who was disappointed at the entirely peaceful attitude of the Chinese, decided to attack it, his plan being to carry out night manœuvres to

the east of the city across the line of march—and to create a "regrettable incident." But he reckoned without Sir George Macartney, who, getting wind of this typically Russian scheme, which received confirmation from the sudden departure of the Cossacks, induced the Chinese authorities at the very last minute to change the line of march from due east to north-west, with a wide detour afterwards to the north. Thanks to this action by our able representative the trap was set in vain. The regiment, which had obeyed its orders with deep reluctance, finally reached Urumchi with its numbers much diminished by desertion, and the ruffianly pork-butcher was subsequently put to death. The Russian troops were shortly afterwards withdrawn from Kashgar, and that city once again settled down to its habitual drowsiness.

In conclusion, the old-world policy of China was to surround her fertile empire with buffer states. At the end of the eighteenth century these included Annam, Siam, Burma, Assam, Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal, Ladak, Kashmir and Khokand, together with the maritime provinces of Siberia. But the nineteenth century, which saw the advance of Russia, the rise of Japan, and also powerful strangers from the west thundering at the watergates of the Middle Kingdom, brought heavy territorial losses to China, and to-day her system of buffer states has been swept away by the new powers. Great Britain has shown considerable activity and has occupied or gained political ascendency over many of these states, and at the present time marches with the Chinese Empire not only on the confines of Burma to the south, but also on the borders of Ladak and Kashmir.

Russia, on her side, has made a great advance, and now occupies Khokand, Andijan and the Khanates generally, together with the Pamirs to the west of Chinese Turkestan; to the north the Russian province of Semirechia, through which is being constructed a railway that will attract much of its commerce, overshadows the province of Chinese Turkestan.

Thus the old order of isolation, on which China relied, is passing, and the new order, which includes modern methods of communication, is coming into force, hastened by the desire for progress which is affecting large sections of mankind in Asia.

The future of Chinese Turkestan is not finally settled, but the World War which has temporarily broken up the Russian Empire will undoubtedly stimulate China to move along the path of progress. If so, there is hope that the condition of this outlying province of her empire may benefit, more especially by improved communications. At the same time there are many parts of Asia which have reason to envy the peace and plenty enjoyed by the inhabitants of Chinese Turkestan.

CHAPTER XVI

A KASHGAR FARMER

La latitude assez basse du Turkestan chinois combinée avec son altitude considérable, la sécheresse de son atmosphère et ses saisons nettement tranchées rendent le pays propre à des cultures très diverses, à celles qui se contentent d'un climat tempéré comme à celles qui exigent des chaleurs fortes et prolongées ; mais excluent les plantes qui craignent les froids hivernaux ou réclament une grande humidité.—GRENARD, *La Haute Asie*, ii. 173.

THE cultivator, who is the backbone of Chinese Turkestan, depends entirely on irrigated crops, as there is no regular rainfall in the country. Rain, termed the " mercy of Allah " in Persia, is considered to be the opposite in Kashgar, partly because of the utter irregularity of its incidence. If there be a heavy fall in the spring, the soil cakes and the young plants cannot force their way through, and this necessitates a fresh sowing. Rain at harvest time, or when the melons ripen, is equally unwelcome, and when there is a heavy rainfall the farmer exclaims, " What great crime has been committed that we suffer such a calamity ? " Snow is regarded with less disfavour. As a rule there is plenty of water for every one in the Kashgar oasis, and fights for it occur only in the spring, when each cultivator wishes to water his land first, in order to secure an early crop for the market.

Owing to the abundance of water and the absence of hail-storms or other serious climatic drawbacks, agriculture, except for rust and blight, which are seldom experienced, is a certainty, in complete contrast to the reputation it bears in countries that depend on the rainfall for their crops. The life of the oasis, where every acre is cultivated and where the agricultural population is comparatively dense, is quite unlike that of Persia, where each village is surrounded by square miles of uncultivated land, which furnishes grazing, fodder and fuel. There are a few isolated villages, or groups of villages, in Chinese Turkestan, but the country generally consists of extensive oases set in a lifeless desert.

The chief crops are millet, rice, maize, wheat, barley, cotton, lucerne clover, hemp, linseed, turnips, carrots and tobacco. Millet and rice are regarded as the best-paying crops, the former occupying one-half of the total area cultivated.

Of fruits and vegetables, apricots, grapes, peaches, nectarines, quinces, cherries, figs, apples, pears, mulberries, pomegranates and melons grow in great profusion, and pumpkins, which are the staple vegetable, are supplemented by carrots, turnips, onions, cucumbers, garlic and fennel.

The upper classes are less civilized than in Persia, partly because they do not mix socially with the European colonies; good fruit trees and seeds have therefore not been introduced. This state of affairs reflects little credit on the merchants from Andijan, who could easily introduce the magnificent fruit trees which are now grown at Tashkent.

The Chinese of the New City farm much better than the native Moslems, and have introduced the

curious plum-cherry, with its blue, white and red varieties of fruit, beans of various kinds, beetroot, cabbages, including kohl rabi, lettuces, potatoes, tomatoes and spinach; but there is little contact between the Chinese and Moslem farmers, so that the latter do not learn much from the efficient Celestials.

The trees in the Kashgar Oasis, other than fruit trees, include the Lombardy and the spreading poplar, the latter growing to a great size, and the Turkestan elm, of which a grafted species grows in a pyramidal shape. The common willow and the Babylonian willow of two species—one with an edible fruit resembling the Bohemian olive—are planted along every irrigation channel and serve as fuel.

Next to agriculture the most important industry is the raising of live-stock—horses, donkeys, camels, cattle, sheep and goats. The horses bred by the Kalmucks around Karashahr are the best, being stronger than the Kirghiz ponies, because the Kalmucks do not drink mare's milk. They are usually geldings, standing about fourteen hands, and are ideal for transport purposes. The Kirghiz pony is hardy and enduring, but not strong or up to much weight. The Yarkandi, especially a roan, was a favourite mount in India in the last century, and is mentioned in Anglo-Indian novels of the period; it is still exported in small numbers.

Donkeys are found in thousands and take the place of the wheelbarrow and the cart in England, besides carrying the bulk of the internal trade. Camels, of the two-humped or Bactrian species, are highly esteemed, especially by the Kirghiz, as they

A LOAD OF CLOVER FROM ISA *HAJI'S* FARM.

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are not affected by cold or deep snow, and can cross rivers that ponies have to swim. Cattle-breeding is carried on mainly in the mountains and in the wooded tracts along the courses of the rivers. The animals are small, and are bred for milk and for ploughing. Sheep are usually of the fat-tailed species, but in the southern districts there is also a short-haired breed. All animals, as a rule, are miserably thin owing to the almost entire absence of grazing.

I think it may be useful to select a typical farmer and study his life closely; for by this means we shall get down to the bed-rock of definite fact, which is preferable to vague generalizations about agriculture. Isa *Haji*, the subject of this sketch, was a farmer, aged 75, who lived not far from the city wall. Helped by two of his five sons, aged 18 and 16 respectively, he farmed 40 *mows*, or about six acres of land, which is the average size of a farm close to Kashgar. Here the manure obtained from the city enables the whole of the land to be cultivated at once, whereas farther off, where little manure is available, the farms are larger because a part of the land must always be allowed to lie fallow. One half of the *Haji's* land was devoted to lucerne clover, the remainder being sown with millet, wheat, rice, cotton, melons and linseed. As a rule only one crop a year was taken off the land; but millet, carrots and turnips were sown after the wheat crop; in this case the millet did not ripen, but was valuable as green forage; the clover was cut four times in the year. In one corner of the farm were willow trees, which were pollarded every four years to serve as fuel for the owners. Isa *Haji*, being an old man, merely assisted in watering

the fields, while his sons did all the ploughing, harvesting and threshing. His two eldest sons kept a grain-shop in Russian Turkestan, the third was a bricklayer, and the others, when not at work on the farm, earned sixpence a day as labourers. The *Haji* owned a yoke of plough-oxen and four donkeys, the former being fed on cotton-seed and the latter on millet. His agricultural implements included a primitive plough, a harrow, mattocks of two sizes, sickles, *zambils* or hurdles for carrying earth, a stone roller for threshing rice and a shovel for winnowing. Manure, consisting of horse and cow droppings, night soil and ashes, was bought in the city at the rate of threepence per donkey load, and used freely on the land, which was a rich alluvial loam; the frequent storms also deposited layers of dust which were regarded as good for the crops.

The house, which Isa *Haji* owned and had built room by room as he could afford it, at a total cost (including the land) of £50, covered a square of sixty feet. The guest-room, in which he lived during the summer and in which the meals were cooked and served, was about twenty feet square and was lighted by a hole in the roof. A mud platform covered with felts, on which the family slept, occupied a prominent position, and the chief piece of furniture was a carved box, which held clothes and served as a bedstead. Above it was a shelf full of Russian teapots. Off this room opened the store-room, in which grain was kept for winter consumption and which served as the living-room in winter. There was also a court-yard partly roofed in with matting during the summer, in which grew a shady tree, and this was the chief working room of the wife and daughters-in-law at

THE SONS OF ISA *H.H.* PLOUGHING

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that season. Here we noticed a cradle, a spinning-wheel and various pans. Two small rooms belonged to two unmarried sons, and the rest of the square contained stabling, an oven and a store for dry fodder.

The home was managed by the wife and her three daughters-in-law, who cooked the food, looked after the children and made the clothes. They did not work in the fields, but spun the cotton into yarn, which they wove into the rough white calico of which most of the clothing of the poorer classes is fashioned.

The staple food of the family was bread made from millet, a grain that is held to be more sustaining than wheat or rice. Isa *Haji's* large family consumed all his share of the crops, except the lucerne and some of the melons, turnips, carrots and linseed, which were sold. The oil of the linseed was used for cooking and lighting.

The chief meal of these peasant-farmers was eaten at sunset and consisted of *suyukash*, a soup prepared from pieces of paste-like macaroni and vegetables boiled in water. In the morning they took tea with cream and salt, and fruit and bread were eaten at odd hours. Meat, generally beef, appeared on their table only once a week. There was plenty of this rude fare, supplemented by slices of pumpkin eaten hot and by other delicacies; and Isa *Haji's* sons appeared healthy, their teeth being noticeably fine and sound. They said that they suffered a good deal from lack of warmth in the winter, as charcoal was dear and had to be used sparingly. They placed a bowl of lighted charcoal under a wooden frame, over which a quilt was thrown, and the family sat by day

and slept by night under this covering, with their feet towards the centre.

Isa *Haji* had been the tenant of the farm for more than ten years. It included three small properties belonging to three Kashgar merchants. Two-thirds of the lucerne, amounting in value to about five pounds, and one half of the other crops, were paid over as rent. He had no security of tenure, and could be turned out at will, but the prospect of this appeared to him unlikely, and he expressed satisfaction with his lot.

The farm paid revenue to the extent of 105 lbs. of wheat, a similar quantity of millet and 2100 lbs. of chopped straw, Isa *Haji* and his landlords each paying one half of the whole. There had also to be met the demand of the Chinese authorities for forced labour on public works and transport, but this was compounded for in money and might come to the equivalent of two shillings per annum. Nothing was paid for the use of irrigation water, and the taxation represented less than 5 per cent of the two main crops. In the case of villages situated at some distance from the city double this amount may be taken by the tax collectors, who are more exacting in proportion to their distance from headquarters.

To sum up, we have an oasis in which agriculture is not affected by the rainfall, but depends entirely on the rivers. The peasants have enough to eat, a good climate and neighbours in abundance. There are few parts of the world where the people are so contented, and, although discontent might perhaps bring an improvement of their lot, it is pleasant to see such cheerful, friendly tillers of the soil leading a healthy agricultural life, and

to meet them returning home at night singing their tuneful songs:

> How happy he who crowns in shades like these
> A youth of labour with an age of ease;
> Who quits a world where strong temptations try,
> And, since 'tis hard to combat, learns to fly.

CHAPTER XVII

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS IN CHINESE TURKESTAN

Straight and slender-waisted are the maids of Kashgar,
Short, with sack-like figures, are the maids of Yangi Hissar.
A goitre above and fat below are the maids of Yarkand.
Arranging apples on saucers are the maids of Khotan-Ilchi.
Wearing felt caps, with foreheads high, are the maids of Sarikol.

The Maids of Turkestan. (From an old ballad.)

THE inhabitants of Chinese Turkestan are divided by the anthropologist into four distinct groups. The first consists of the Sarikoli and Pakhpo mountaineers, who are pure Aryans. The second is a desert group including the mass of the inhabitants of the country, the basis of this population being Aryan with some Uighur admixture, more especially at Aksu in the north. The third group is formed of the Kirghiz, the Dulanis and the inhabitants of Aksu; the fourth consists of the Chinese and Mongols, whose differentiation from the Kirghiz is to be noted. The Aryan type has been best preserved in the southern and south-western parts of the province, with their rugged mountain areas which are difficult of access. In the western districts Turkish influence is evident, in the northern the Mongol zone begins, and this, as our survey moves eastwards, gives place to the Chinese.

Throughout this work reference is constantly made to the people of Chinese Turkestan, and here an attempt will be made to summarize their character. They are distinctly to be classified as "tame," in the frontier officer's sense of the word, being submissive, lacking in spirit and ready to serve any master, provided that they can enjoy life in their own way, with feasting, women and music. In their ballads they complain of forced labour, with its separation from wife and family, and they sing the praises of the home. But they are not faithful to their wives: "Let every one follow his inclination and enjoy himself with the woman he prefers. If the kings were just, every one would have his beloved mistress at his side." Lack of physical and moral energy and dislike of hard, continuous work and, above all, of discipline, are notable characteristics of these apathetic oasis-dwellers; but against these imperfections, which they share, more or less, with the neighbouring peoples of Russian Turkestan, must be set many good qualities. Hospitality is found everywhere, strangers are welcomed and the people are pleasant to deal with, their politeness being especially marked. The Chinese rule, though supported by few troops, is a living force, and this proves that the people are law-abiding. Moreover, there is very little fanaticism, and the inhabitants of Chinese Turkestan, although obedient to their spiritual leaders, are not easily excited to rebellion. One inconsistent trait in this home-loving race is the readiness they show to undertake a journey, though travelling is generally hard and wearisome; but perhaps the chief cause of this is curiosity, and, after all, relatively few travellers leave their beloved province. "We love our festivals"

is the general refrain of this happy, but nonchalant, race of lotos-eaters.

During the months we spent in this little-known country, I employed my spare time in collecting information regarding its manners and customs, which, as is natural, bore strong traces of Chinese origin. They were also influenced by the fact that the people were Buddhists for many hundreds of years before their forcible conversion to Islam in the tenth century, when they became Sunnis, looking up to the *Khan* of Bokhara and, above him, to the Sultan of Turkey. Their holy places remained unchanged so far as the sites were concerned, and on them shrines in honour of Moslem saints have been erected. Ancestor-worship, too, is inherited from the Chinese, with the result that the tombs are visited with a frequency unknown elsewhere in Central Asia.

Girls, when they reach a marriageable age, visit one of the shrines and pray as follows: "O Allah, O Lord of the Shrine, grant me a house with a kettle ready placed on the stove, and a spoon in the kettle. May it be a house with its four sides decorated with cloth, with carpets and druggets ready spread, and with towels hanging from the pegs. Grant me a husband whose father and mother are dead; and may he have no other wife!" When the saint vouchsafes to hear this delightfully naïve petition and a suitor appears on the scene, there is no formal betrothal, although in the case of the wealthy large sums are paid by the bridegroom and the bride is richly dowered. Costly gifts, too, are given to the bride by the bridegroom and by relatives and friends. In the case of a poor man, a payment of merely one

or two pounds sterling is made to the parents, who defray the bride's outfit from the money. The next step taken is to obtain a certificate from the *Imam* of the quarter, that the woman is free to marry, and after the payment of a small fee a written permission for the marriage is given by the local *Beg*.

Nowadays there is no special wedding-dress, and even the globular wedding-cap of cloth of gold or silver has ceased to be worn. The marriage ceremony is generally celebrated at the termination of a feast which lasts until the evening. A *mulla* reads the *fatiha* or opening chapter of the Koran, after which the agent of the bride goes to the women's apartment and asks her thrice whether she accepts the bridegroom, and upon receiving her bashfully given consent, he returns to the men to announce the success of his mission, thereby completing the *nikah* or legal ceremony. Two pieces of bread soaked in salt water are then given to the bridegroom and bride respectively, and this, in popular opinion, is the most important act of the marriage. Indeed many marriages are contracted by the observance of this custom alone, bread and salt probably symbolizing the inauguration of a new household, although the meaning has now been forgotten.

As the bride leaves her old home, the mother laments: "O my black-eyed darling! Alas, my child, my child! My sweet-voiced, soft-eyed darling! My daughter leaves me, and I remain in an empty house. Alas, my child, my child!"

When conducted to her new home, the people of the quarter bar her path by means of a fire, and demand gifts in the shape of handkerchiefs. The groom, too, will not allow her to dismount from

her horse until he is handsomely fee'd, and finally, when the bride enters her husband's house, flour and cotton are set before her and given away to the poor. This ceremony is termed *Ak-Yul-luk* or "White Road," and symbolizes a happy journey through life. During the lifetime of the older generation the bridegroom is called *kiau oghli* or "son-in-law" by the parents, and the bride *kelin* or "daughter-in-law," but she is spoken of as a *chaukan* or married woman by her neighbours.

There is an immense difference between the villagers and the townspeople in Kashgar, both in the position of women and in their morality. The villagers as a rule marry only one wife and rarely practise divorce; and their wives take a high position inherited from pre-Islamic days. For example, it is customary to agree, before the reading of the *nikah*, that the wife shall be taken to the shrine of *Hazrat Apak* for *tawwuf* or "circling" of the tomb when the apricots are ripe, other stipulations being that the woman cannot be taken to another town without her consent, and sometimes that the husband shall not take another wife. The women may frequently be seen riding to market on good horses and attending to business almost on an equality with the men. In the city wives are constantly divorced, so much so that the majority of them remarry many times. Temporary marriages, resembling in effect *sigheh* marriages in Persia, are also very common, and some women systematically indulge in divorces in order to gain money. They cannot remarry until after the expiration of the *iddat* of three months and ten days, but upon receiving two letters of divorce—generally obtained in different towns—they can remarry at once by using the

older letter. It is an indication of the low position held by women in the towns that a merchant, on starting off to business, will sometimes return home if he first meets one of the fair sex, this being looked upon as a bad omen.

Constant intermarriage, as in most Moslem countries, produces sad results in the form of idiocy, deafness and dumbness in the offspring, such visitations being especially noticeable among the rich, landed classes, who intermarry generation after generation, in order to keep the family property intact. So far is this policy pursued that in the richest family of Kashgar many of the girls have perforce remained single because there were not enough cousins to go round. It is interesting to note that in this matter the Chinese go to the opposite extreme, the whole nation being divided up into about one hundred divisions, and no man being permitted to marry a woman of his own division, although she be in no way related to him.

In Kashgar, marriage is not the chief event in a woman's life, the ceremony of *chachbagh* or " braiding of the hair " being far more important, although held at no fixed time after marriage, and not depending on the birth of a child. It is celebrated by a great feast, with dancing, which sometimes lasts for three days. Gifts, far richer than those given at marriage, are bestowed on the wife, the parents in many cases handing over landed property. The culminating point is the appearance of the woman, who, attired in her richest clothes, takes the seat of honour in the room; and then, in the presence of all, her hair, hitherto worn in four or five plaits, is formally and for the first time braided in two plaits, and she becomes

thereby a *jawan*. She is now entitled to wear five red semicircular strips of embroidery on the right side of the neck of her gown, one below the other, and increasing successively in length. In the case of the rich, Indian cloth of gold is generally used.

One day a woman was seen weeping at a shrine, and her prayer was as follows: "O Holy One! What shall I do? How shall I live? I have been left an orphan. I am become a stranger. What shall I do? Am I to suffer the hardsbips of an orphan? Am I to remain lonely? I have no father, no mother. Every one is oppressing me. O Allah, I am lost among friends and foes. Alas, my stranger's fate! Alas, my orphan's fate! O Holy One, put love into the heart of my husband and make his mind just towards me. O Allah, grant me the wish of my heart, give me a son, a son with a long life. I have become a stranger. Thou hast left me an orphan. O Allah, help me and make my enemies like dust."

After this fervent prayer the suppliant, with her eyes shut, put her hand into a hole in the tomb and drew forth a morsel of earth, which she swallowed. Her faith was justified, and in due course of time she began to make arrangements for an easy delivery, to ensure which a visit was paid to a *bakhshi* or magician. He played upon a drum and chanted some incoherent gibberish, the woman meanwhile holding a rope that hung from the roof, and dancing round it until giddiness ensued. After this ceremony she paid a fee, gave alms to the poor, and returned home with her heart at ease. Later on she visited the tombs of her ancestors, taking with her an offering of food, and begged them to intercede for an easy delivery and,

A MAGICIAN AND HIS DISCIPLE.

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above all, for the birth of a son. She laid the offering near the grave, praised her ancestors, lamented her own failings, walked round the tomb seven times and finally distributed the food to the beggars. About a month before the event, she went on foot to a place where there were seven water mills, and after slowly crossing the seven ducts that fed them, returned home with happy confidence in the special efficacy of the ceremony.

When her hour was come, no one was allowed to leave the house unless upon business that was urgent, in which case no harm was anticipated, provided that some article of dress was left behind. The women of the neighbourhood assembled to help, and during the delivery cried out with the idea of keeping the birth a secret, a custom adopted from the Chinese. The newly born infant, too, was carefully concealed from visitors.

If former children belonging to the parents have all died, which is, alas, a frequent occurrence, the father, dressed as a beggar, takes the baby to the bazar and begs from the shopkeepers small pieces of calico, which are made into a shirt, the idea being to avoid misfortune by thus humbling himself. Special names signifying "solid" or "stay" or "may he stay!" are in such cases given to the child when he is named, between the third and seventh day, by a *mulla*, who first whispers the *azan* or call to prayer into his ear. On the fortieth day the head of the infant is shaved and the hair buried. A sheep is sacrificed and eaten on this occasion, while its bones, which must not be broken, are buried.

The rite of circumcision, one of the most important

of the "five foundations" of Islam, is performed between the third and eighth years. The barber operates, and in the case of the rich the event is celebrated by a feast lasting two or three days, at which the boy receives presents including hard-boiled eggs, with which he plays a game by knocking them together.

Children of both sexes are sent to school very young, the idea being that they will gradually pick up their letters. Education in Kashgar merely consists of learning by heart a chapter of the Koran and its Turki equivalent. The letters are taught, penmanship is encouraged, and lessons are given in the forms of prayer and of ablution. Geography, history (as distinct from legend), mathematics and foreign languages are utterly neglected, and the girls leave school at about ten and most of the boys a year or two later. The teachers are narrow-minded bigots, and the parents are content to have it so, with the result that there is not much progress in Kashgar.

We visited the chief boys' school in Kashgar, where the master bade his favourite pupils recite passages from the Koran. This they did in a lugubrious sing-song, swaying backwards and forwards as if in pain. The pedagogue and his scholars were then photographed, holding imposing leather-bound and silver-embossed books, which on enquiry proved to be commentaries on the Koran.

The death ceremonies are in general those common to Islam throughout Asia, but there are also some customs peculiar to Kashgar. The body, after being washed and shrouded, is laid out with the thumbs of the hands and the big toes tied together,

A KASHGAR SCHOOL.

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while the chin is also tied up. It is then carried out of the house and, at seven paces from the door, a spoonful of rice water is poured on the ground. At every seven steps this is repeated, and the following verse recited:

> *Zir*[1] has come, *Zabar* has come,
> From the centre of the earth news has come.
> O swift dogs of the door of heaven,
> Come, open the gates of paradise for this man.

This mention of dogs is due to Chinese influence; in Islam they occupy a degraded position and are considered unclean. Contrary to the general usage of Islam, white is the mourning colour, as in China. The funeral procession to the grave is headed by professional mourners, and accompanied by a *mulla*, who reads sentences from the Koran on the way, and conducts the service at the grave.

Women do not attend at the graveside, but mourn at a neighbouring mosque: "O my father! My brave father! My good father!" or "O my mother! My beautiful mother with black eyebrows! Thou leavest us and we are alone." One curious custom is that of driving a stick into the grave near the head of the corpse, which Grenard considers to be a survival of the ancient practice of offering food to the dead. On the third day a solemn feast is held in the house of the deceased. The mourning lasts for forty days, and upon the termination of this period a second feast is given, and the normal life is then resumed by the mourners.

The system of medicine at Kashgar is based on the ancient Greek theory as taught by Hippocrates,

[1] *Zir* is the mark for the sound "i," and *zabar* for the sound "a"; their inclusion is apparently unmeaning.

Galen and Plato, whose works were translated into Arabic and Persian, especially by Abu Ali bin Sina, known in Europe as Avicenna. Diseases are divided into the categories of "hot" and "cold," to be cured by medicines and food of the opposite category. For instance, in the case of fever, cock's flesh, which is "cold," is eaten, or fish. Hen's flesh is considered "hot" in Persia, but in Kashgar there is some difference of opinion among the faculty.

The Kashgar doctors believe implicitly in giving pigeon's or duck's blood in cases of poisoning, and, moreover, prescribe the flesh of a nestling sparrow torn in two to ease swellings in the groin; they stop bleeding by means of a pad composed of burnt felt, or a bit of leather covered with mud or filth. Rheumatism and dropsy are treated by burying the patient in hot sand or by wrapping him in the skin of a recently killed sheep, and abdominal complaints by sticking several lighted candles into a loaf and placing it on the patient's stomach.

So much for the doctors of Kashgar; but, as their reputation is very low, recourse is had to other means of curing sickness. Among the most common is the female diviner, who, when called in, kneads flour into a ball, recites some gibberish in which the names of the archangels and of Solomon are mentioned, and solemnly buries the ball under the fire, reciting the names of all the holy men who are buried in the neighbourhood. Whichever of these saints is being mentioned when the ball bursts has to be propitiated. Oil is taken to his shrine, where it is boiled and the steam is inhaled by the patient, after which it is mixed with food, part of which is distributed to the poor and part eaten for seven days by the sufferer.

This ceremony is termed *chachratku* or "bursting of a ball of kneaded flour" and is regarded as most efficacious.

The power of the evil eye is firmly believed in by all classes, and children usually wear round their necks a little leather case containing a verse of the Koran as a protection against it. If a child is believed to be possessed, an old woman recites the following:

"Allah is sublime. Praise be to Allah! There is no god but Allah. If thou art an evil eye depart, as this place is not for thee. Go to a deserted water-mill; go to a deserted house; go to a grave; go to the house of the *Kazi*. These are the commands of Allah, of Solomon and of the Saint." The evil eye cannot withstand this invocation and leaves the sufferer forthwith.

In cases of possession by the devil, a magician is called in, and chants as follows: "Another head has come to the head; another body has come to the body. Your master has come; a jade lamp and blood sherbet are here. You will soon be like ashes, for I have an iron knife to cut you with and coal bullets to shoot you with." The devil, hearing these threats from the magician, quits the patient without more ado.

Among general remedies are the following: The eyes of sheep sacrificed at the *Id-i-Gurban* at Mecca are dried and kept as powerful charms for sickness. When used they are moistened and applied to the forehead. Another remedy consists of bread and meat, collected from seven bakers and butchers. The food, when prepared, is taken, together with a doll, to the grave of a saint, after which some of it is eaten and the remainder distributed to the poor.

This effects the cure. Yet another curious treatment is to cover up the patient's head while a man walks round him with lighted straw, uttering certain special prayers during the fumigation.

As to children's ailments: if a child cries too much, straw is swept up from three roads, dust is taken from the footprints of passers-by and Syrian rue is collected from the desert; the mixture is then lighted and the child is cured by being held over the smoke. If a child suffers from deafness, one method is to call in the services of a trumpeter, who spits into the ear, while another plan is to cut seven small twigs, wrap them up in cotton and, on market day, to tie the little bundle to the ear of a donkey loaded with salt. For other ailments, seven coral beads are thrown into a spring; or, again, copper pieces are begged from seven men named Mohamed, others are added by the parents, and a charm is made to hang round the child's neck.

Finally, there are certain shrines famous for the cure of specific diseases. For skin disease a shrine known as the *Sigm* is much frequented. There mud is taken from a well outside and thrown at the wall with a prayer to the saint, after which the suppliant walks away without looking back.

I conclude this brief account of the treatment of diseases in Kashgar by a story entitled "The Clever Physician": [1]

"Once upon a time there was a physician. When this physician entered the room where the sick person was, he looked all about it, and whatever met his eyes in the shape of an eatable, he looked at the patient and said, 'You have eaten such and such a

[1] Vide *The Eastern Turkestan Dialect*, by G. Raquette.

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A WOMAN THROWING MUD TO EFFECT A CURE.

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thing and that is what has done you harm.' The physician had a pupil, and wherever the physician went, there went his pupil with him. A rich man had become paralysed, that is to say, unable to walk. Many physicians had treated him, but his disease did not abate. At last, having heard that the aforesaid physician's pupil was a wonderful medical adept, he summoned him to his house.

"When the physician's pupil had entered the house and had carefully looked round, he perceived that there was nothing at all in the shape of an eatable in it, but in one corner of the room an old donkey-saddle had been thrown down. When he saw this he exclaimed, 'Oh, rich man! you have eaten an old donkey-saddle, through which your disease has increased and you have become paralysed.' When he said this, the rich man was very angry, and exclaiming, 'Does one who is called a human being eat donkey-saddles?' sprang up in his rage in order to beat him and—walked!

"The physician, poor fellow, was terrified and had fled away. The rich man was struck with wonder and exclaimed, 'This is a great man; for my leg, which grew no better for any physician's medicine, has now become quite well through this person.' He caused the physician's pupil to be summoned, apologized to him, and sent him away with many valuable gifts."

At the first fall of snow a man frequently calls on a friend with some snow wrapped in an envelope, while in another are enclosed verses:

My dear friend with this document I throw you snow;
From joy of heart this game arose;
Cups and jugs we have collected and wooden trays;

And we have prepared sweetmeats.
The mandoline, violin, zither and tambourine we have made ready.
When snow has fallen in winter, do not people give entertainments ?
If there are friends living around do not people invite them ?
If you are clever enough to seize the man who has brought the snow,
Powder his face, paint him like a girl, and beat him severely.

The visitor places his verses secretly in the house and then decamps. If the owner of the house catches him he beats him, paints his face like a girl and leads him through the streets calling out, "This is the punishment for the man who throws snow"; and the visitor is then bound to give an entertainment. But if the owner of the house does not catch the visitor, he himself must prepare a banquet. If he fails to do so within a week, bulrushes are tied on the top of his door, and if this hint is not sufficient, the bier from the cemetery is placed outside his house.

Owing to Chinese influence, there is no Moslem country where respect for parents and for superiors is so strong as in Kashgar. During the lives of the parents they are never referred to by name by their children, but are always addressed as "My Lord." A son will never sit in the presence of his father without special permission, but will stand with the head bowed and hands folded in token of humility. He would never dream of retiring to sleep before his father, nor of smoking in his presence. To superiors deference is shown by dismounting from horseback, and by always prefacing an answer with *taksir* or "fault," which has come to be the equivalent of our "Sir." Upon receipt of a robe of honour, the recipient bows low, sweeping the arms in a circle to stroke the beard. Women courtesy by bowing low with folded hands.

The Kashgaris have few games, but kite-flying, an elementary form of rounders, pitch-and-toss into a hole with walnuts or coins, and a kind of tip-cat are favourite amusements. Grown-up men indulge in ram-fighting and partridge-fighting, heavy bets being made on the contests.

Music is extremely popular, the Kashgar peasants being distinctly musical, and their refrains, sung in unison on returning from work, are pleasing to the European ear. The usual instruments are the tambourine, the mandoline and the four-stringed *rubab*. In Kashgar dancing is regarded as improper, and is indulged in only by professional women or boys; but in the Khotan oasis, among the Dulanis of Merket, the Sarikolis and the Kirghiz, men and women dance together at weddings. At entertainments the men and women sit on opposite sides and, when the music commences, a woman rises and places a handkerchief in front of a man, who thereupon rises also, sings a song and returns the handkerchief. This is done by all present, and men and women then dance together.

During my stay in Chinese Turkestan I sought for any custom which might be a survival from the days of the Nestorian Christians. One such is that horse-dealers, when a bargain is not concluded, make the sign of the cross on the horse to avert the evil eye. It is interesting to note that, owing to Chinese influence, black and dark grey are the favourite colours for horses, whereas few people care to buy a roan, whose colour is deemed unlucky.

CHAPTER XVIII

STALKING THE GREAT SHEEP OF MARCO POLO

Do you know the world's white roof-tree—do you know that windy rift
  Where the baffling mountain-eddies chop and change ?
Do you know the long day's patience, belly-down on frozen drift,
  While the head of heads is feeding out of range ?
It is there that I am going, where the boulders and the snow lie,
  With a trusty, nimble tracker that I know,
I have sworn an oath, to keep it on the Horns of Ovis poli,
  And the Red Gods call me out and I must go !

KIPLING, *The Feet of the Young Men.*

LIFE in the East, more especially away from important centres, lacks most of the amenities which are taken as a matter of course in the civilized West. Family life is broken up, society is restricted, communications are bad, involving few and irregular posts, and health frequently suffers from the climate and from indifferent food. So much for the debit side. But fortunately there is a credit side, and for the Englishman sport is a large item on this side and does much to brighten the otherwise trying monotony of life in Asia. It also helps him to maintain his energy and health, and with it that sane outlook which is one of the main secrets of our success as a world-power.

When appointed to Kashgar I had hopes of fulfilling the ambition of a life-time by stalking one of Marco Polo's great sheep, the *Ovis poli.* As a youth

I had been fascinated by the record of the celebrated Venetian traveller, and after joining the army had made considerable efforts to travel in the Pamirs in 1891 and 1892. But the arrest of Younghusband, mentioned in Chapter XV., closed the "Roof of the World" to the private traveller, and it seemed as if I were not destined to tread these mysterious upland valleys. But the fates were kind. On the way to Kashgar I stopped at Petrograd, where a high Russian official, whose colleague I had been at Meshed, said that he felt sure I should wish to shoot an *Ovis poli* in the Pamirs. I replied emphatically in the affirmative, and it was speedily arranged that I should receive an invitation to travel in the regions which for so many years I had longed to visit.

Before describing the *Ovis poli*, which confers the blue riband upon the hunter of big game, both from the magnificence of the trophy and the inaccessibility of its habitat, I will quote Marco Polo, who wrote: "There are great numbers of all kinds of wild beasts [in the Pamirs]; among others, wild sheep of great size, whose horns are good six palms in length. From these horns the shepherds make great bowls to eat from, and they use the horns also to enclose folds for their cattle at night."

The credit of Marco suffered through the ignorance of mankind, and it was not until the nineteenth century that his character for accuracy was vindicated by Lieutenant Wood, who, when he reached England in 1838 after his famous journey to a chief source of the Oxus, exhibited some skulls with horns 4 feet 8 inches long, and on the strength of these specimens the species was appropriately named *Ovis poli* or "The sheep of (Marco) Polo."

It is the most splendid member of a splendid group, to which belong also the *Ovis ammon* of Tibet, with more massive but shorter horns, and the *Ovis karelini* of the Tian Shan, which is a smaller sub-species of the *poli*, the "record" head, shot by E. W. Dixon, measuring only 58½ inches. In the *Ovis poli*, the enormous horns are longer and relatively narrower than in any of the other wild sheep, forming a more open spiral and much more than one complete circle, with the flat surface markedly angulated.[1] The summer coat is lightly speckled and the legs are white, but in the winter the ruff becomes pure white. The height at the shoulders exceeds 12 hands, and the weight may be about 22 stone. The length of horns is enormous, one specimen, believed to be the longest on record, measuring 6 feet 3 inches! Marco's "six palms" may perhaps be the equivalent of 5 feet; so that his estimate was in no way exaggerated.

The great distinction of being the first European to shoot an *Ovis poli* was won by Captain (the late Sir Henry) Trotter, who describes the event as follows: "It was during a very tedious and long march of thirty-seven miles, mostly through snow, that my attention was suddenly called to the presence of some wild sheep about two hundred yards up the hillside. My rifle was handy, and in a few seconds one of them came rolling down. It was the first *Ovis poli* ever shot by a European sportsman, but it was unfortunately a very poor specimen."[2] Since that date

[1] Vide *The Sheep and its Cousins*, by the late R. Lydekker, who termed the *poli*, *Ovis ammon poli*, and the *karelini*, *Ovis ammon littledalei*.

[2] "The Amir Yakub Khan and Eastern Turkestan in Mid-Nineteenth Century," by Colonel Sir Henry Trotter, K.C.M.G., C.B. (*Journal of the Central Asian Society*, vol. iv., 1917, Part IV.).

British big-game shots, including the most famous of their generation, have visited these remote upland valleys in pursuit of this king of sheep.

When I actually visited the Pamirs I found that some of the descriptions I had read did not convey a clear impression on all points. Perhaps my chief disappointment was the aridity of the country, for, travelling in June and July, I had expected to find rich meadows decked with Alpine flowers. On the contrary, nowhere did I see anything but the scantiest pasturage, and it remains a subject of wonder that the huge *Ovis poli* can find nourishment in such a barren land. A second point which struck me was that the Pamirs were for the most part open and easy to traverse, and the mountains, although actually rising very high above sea-level, appeared almost insignificant when viewed from the high altitude at which we were travelling. The one point on which there was no mistake was the severity of the weather.

Starting from Kashgar in considerable heat on June 7, we crossed the Katta Dawan twelve days later in equally considerable cold, and from its crest, at an elevation of 15,250 feet, the Pamirs lay before us. To the north the Trans-Alai range rose up in snow-covered peaks, while almost at our feet a corner of the Great Karakul, the largest lake of the Pamirs, was visible. Descending into the valley from the storm-swept pass, I felt very happy that I had at last reached the haunt of the *Ovis poli*, and my elation was increased by seeing three small herds of females grazing on the mountain side as we passed down the valley to our camp near the lake.

The following morning I started off to try for game, feeling as keen and excited as I had done

during my first shooting expedition more than twenty-five years ago, when everything was "fair and new." I had fortunately secured the services of a good *shikari*, by name Nadir, who has already been mentioned. He had travelled with other Englishmen and quite grasped our methods of stalking, which utterly puzzle an untutored Kirghiz. He was indeed a treasure; for, besides being a good stalker, he understood how to manage the Kirghiz, who worked willingly under him.

Followed by some ponies carrying bedding and food, we rode across the level steppe to the foot-hills. By good luck we sighted a herd of six or eight four-year old rams, which were grazing about a mile off to our right, and before very long we saw their horns moving over a low ridge about 400 yards away. I jumped off and, running up to the ridge, had an easy shot and bagged my first *Ovis poli*. Though the head was a small one, such a start was of good omen for the future.

We afterwards examined the ground for miles, but saw no tracks of big rams; so we bivouacked in the hills and returned to camp the following day, satisfied that the local *shikari* was speaking the truth when he explained that the veterans visited the range only in winter. There was, indeed, no chance of a big head anywhere near the Karakul, and as sport was merely a pleasant incident of the journey, not its object, we marched on to Pamirsky Post.

From this centre we were making for Sarikol, and, owing to it being midsummer, when the Kirghiz were grazing their flocks all over the country, the prospects of bagging a good head appeared to be small. Nadir, however, knew of a *nullah* to the south,

OVIS POLI—THE 51-INCH HEAD.

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and we determined to give it a trial, and therefore made for the Uchak Valley, where we camped at an elevation of 13,500 feet, some miles from the stalking ground, for the sake of obtaining supplies and water.

It was bitterly cold at night, but we started off for our day's stalking by 4 A.M., warmly wrapped up and riding the invaluable yak. Walking at these high altitudes is trying to the heart, especially to the middle-aged, and I decided, wisely I think, to save myself as far as possible. We gradually made our way up the open but stony valley towards the skirt of the main range, riding up the side of the mountain almost to the snow line, where we dismounted to spy. The bare, open hillside was littered with large and small boulders; there was little grass and no cover to speak of; so I did not feel hopeful.

Fortune, however, was kind, and before very long a herd headed by a really fine ram was sighted, slowly grazing its way uphill. For a long while we watched our quarry, as at one time it bore away from us and then again turned in our direction, until we finally saw that its line lay about a mile from where we were in hiding. The stalk consisted mainly in crawling round boulders; but although the wind was favourable we were seen before we approached within the usual range for a shot, as was indeed inevitable owing to lack of cover.

The only course left was to rely on my telescopic sight and risk a long shot. But I could not see the quarry either from a lying or from a sitting position, owing to the boulders, and at the distance a standing shot would have been folly. Accordingly I told Nadir to bend down and, using his shoulder as a rest, was able to aim steadily at the big ram, which, after

stopping for a moment to gaze at us, was moving off at a slow pace. My *shikari* was as steady as a rock, and, thanks to this, I was able to hit the ram through the heart. It was a most fortunate shot; for the distance was paced out at 300 yards.

Nadir and the Kirghiz, wild with excitement, raced off to the fallen ram, while I, equally elated but far less active, slowly followed them, panting for breath when I attempted to run. It was indeed a lucky day, as the ram was a fine six-year-old specimen, standing as high as a small mule, and with a perfect pair of horns measuring 51 inches.

On the following day I wounded a second ram in the shoulder by another long shot, and tracked it until nightfall, leaving it when we were about five miles from camp. Early the next morning we sighted it again near the foot of a precipitous hill on a wide open plain where it had joined some ewes. Stalking was out of the question, as concealment was impossible, and we felt depressed until the Kirghiz told us that a few miles off there was a man, the owner of two hunting dogs who would run down the wounded quarry. In time he appeared on the scene and handed over his dogs to the Kirghiz *shikari*, while I sat down to watch. The Kirghiz showed great skill in separating the ram from the ewes, and when the dogs were let loose he ran at their heels at a remarkable pace. The ram went very fast at first, but then circled and doubled, threatening the dogs at times. But its efforts to escape were vain, and after a five minutes' run the noble quarry was pulled down and the *shikari* cut its throat. The scramble down to the valley was very steep and long, but my yak was equal to it, and I was interested in watching some

HUNTING-DOGS WITH KIRGHIZ OWNER.

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snowcock, which kept flying past us in alarm, displaying their striking plumage to great advantage. When we reached the bottom of the hill we found the ram to be a fine head, but smaller than the one shot on the first day, which, according to our information, was the biggest in that area, although not a first-class head.

The dogs were not fed until they were rested, and to my surprise they refused a piece of bread ; but it was explained to me that bread was such a delicacy among the Kirghiz that a dog never had a chance of tasting it and so did not know what it was !

Their owner, like all the Kirghiz I met, was friendly and gave me his views on life. He laid down emphatically that no man of substance could be comfortable without four wives, and on my challenging this statement he was quite contemptuous and said that the Prophet, on Him be Peace, gave his commandments wisely when he permitted Moslems to marry four helpmates, as two were needed to milk the yaks and the sheep, a third to do the cooking and a fourth to sew and weave carpets. He ended up by saying, " Praise be to Allah ! I have four obedient wives, who spend all their days in trying to please me ! "

On the way home we passed a number of fine skulls lying about below a bluff which the Kirghiz referred to as a " cemetery." They said that the *Ovis poli* are hunted in the snow by packs of wolves and take refuge on such steep places, where they are surrounded. In spite of their huge horns the rams apparently never attempt to defend themselves, and as their joints, heated by the pursuit, stiffen from the cold, they fall an easy prey to their enemies.

. . . . . .

As I sit at home surrounded by trophies gained in the plains of India, in Kashmir, in Ladak, in Persia and finally in the Pamirs, each head evokes pleasing memories of the stalk and recalls some of the happiest days of my life. On no expedition does the golden haze lie deeper than on the successful stalking of the great sheep of Marco Polo, in the remote upland valleys of the "Roof of the World."

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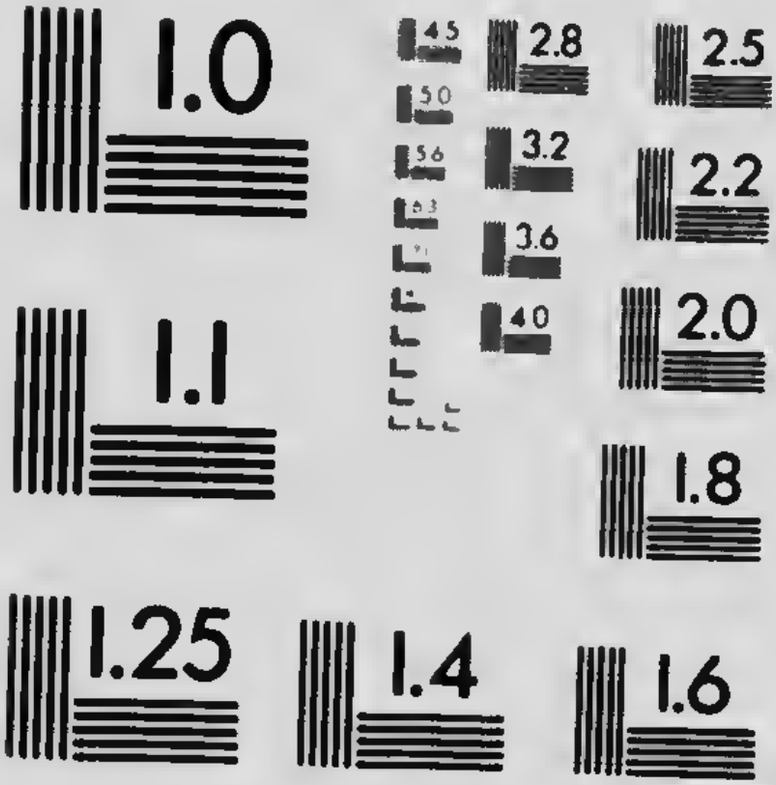

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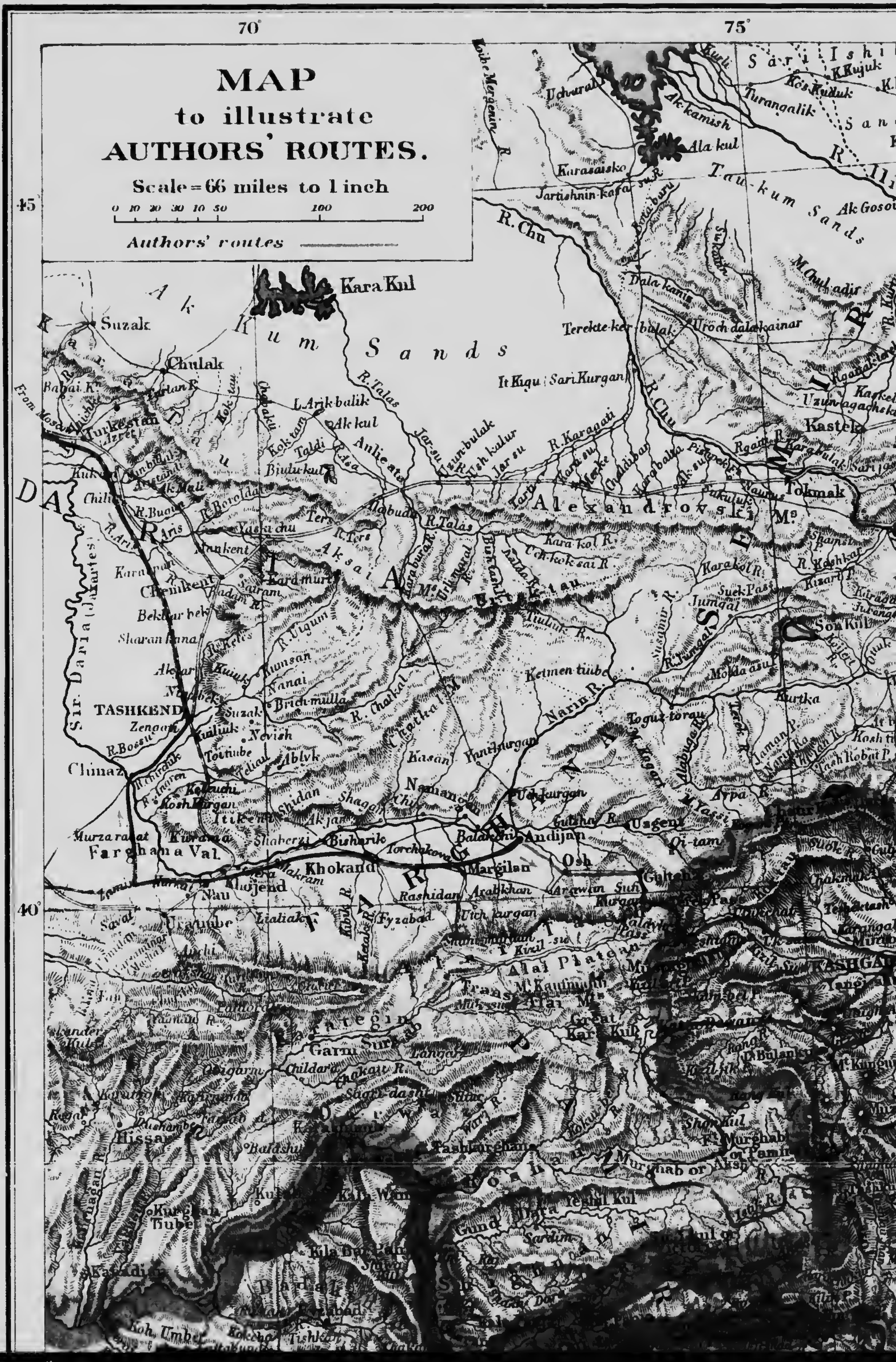

MAP
to illustrate
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0 10 20 30 40 50 100 200
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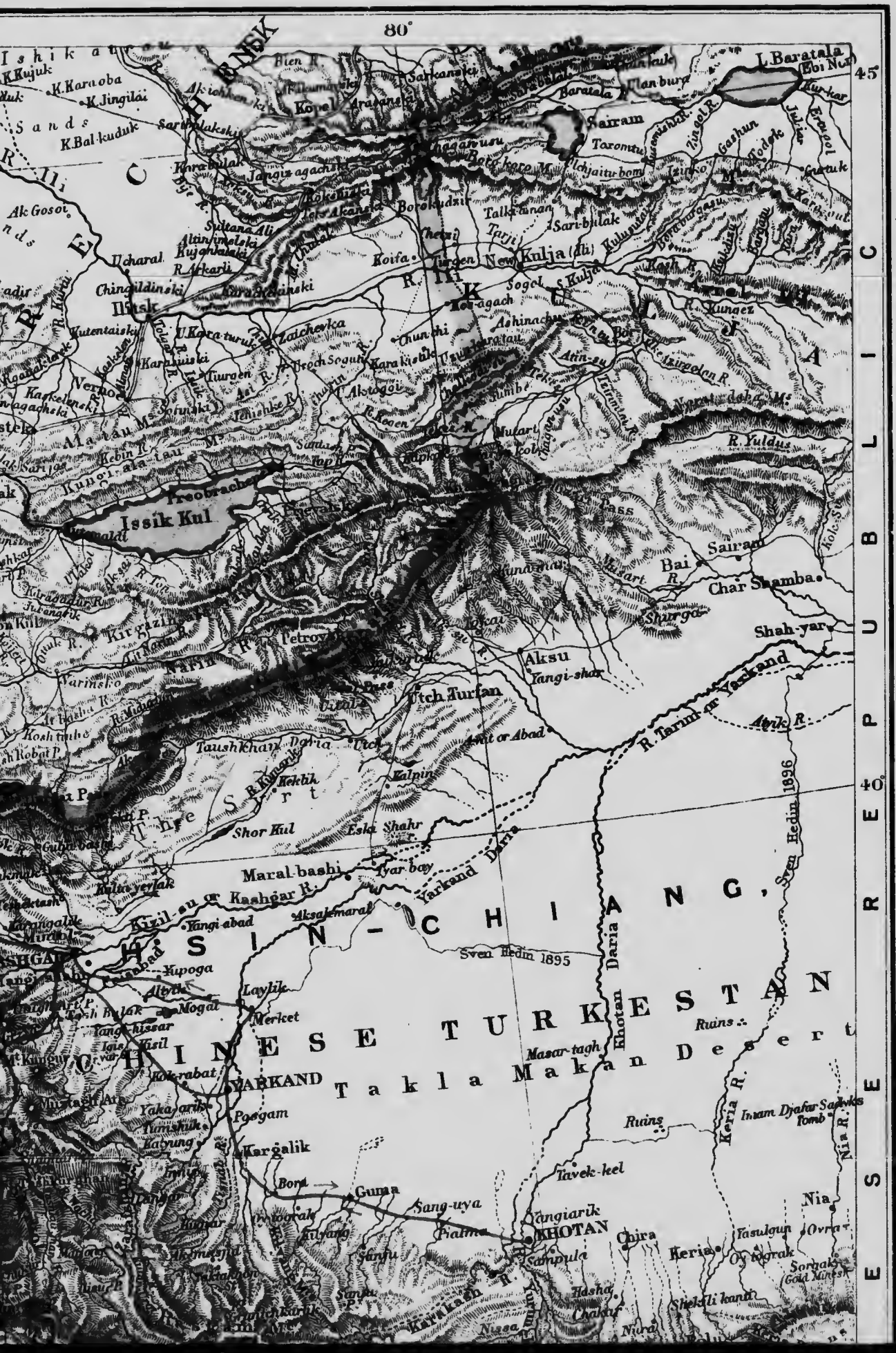
70°
75°
45°
40°
Kara Kul
Ak Kum Sands
Suzak
Chulak
Turkestan
Tau-kum Sands
R. Chu
R. Talas
Aulie ata
Alexandrovski Ms.
Tokmak
Chemkent
TASHKEND
Sir Daria (Jaxartes)
Chinaz
Khokand
Margilan
Andijan
Osh
Namangan
Khojend
Ura tube
Alai Plateau
Trans Alai Ms.
Great Kara Kul
Karategin
Garm
Hissar
Kurgan Tiube
Kara Kul
KASHGAR
Murghab or Aksu R.
Yeshil Kul
Koh. Umber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Sairam
Kulja (Ili)
New Kulja
Issik Kul
Preobrachen
Aksu
Yangi-shar
Utch Turfan
Shah-yar
Char Shamba
Bai
Shor Kul
Maral-bashi
Kashgar R.
Yarkand Daria
Yangi-abad
Aksakmaral
Yar-bay
Eska Shahr
Kalpin
Taushkhan Daria
Kizil-su or Kashgar R.
Kupoga
Laylik
Merket
Mogal
Yangi-hissar
Kokrabat
YARKAND
Posgam
Kargalik
Guma
Sang-uya
Yangiarik
KHOTAN
Sampula
Chira
Keria
Tavek-kel
Ruins
Masar-tagh
Khotan Daria
Keria R.
Nia R.
Nia
Imam Djafar Sadiks Tomb
Sorgak (Gold Mines)
Sven Hedin 1895
Sven Hedin 1896
R. Tarim or Yarkand
R. Yuldus
Ak Gosoi
Ilitsk
Uchara
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Sarkand
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